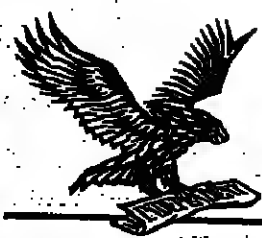


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THE INDEPENDENT

Nº 3,149

FRIDAY 22 NOVEMBER 1996

WEATHER: Sunny with showers later (BR45P) 40p



The Tabloid
The woman who hooked Daniel Day-Lewis



The Tabloid
Sheryl Crow: a rocky road to gold



Comment
Suzanne Moore: Why I feel sorry for the boys page 21

Grey suits rap Major on blunders

Colin Brown
Chief Political Correspondent

Leaders of the 1922 Committee of Tory MPs — the men in grey suits — last night met the Prime Minister to discuss backbench unrest over Europe and anxiety that the Government is making too many blunders on a range of issues.

The Independent learned that at a meeting earlier in the day of the 1922 Committee — the safety valve for backbench pressure — chairman Sir Marcus Fox reported deep unrest among Tory MPs over the Government's handling of the partial ban on guns, combat knives, and Europe which led to renewed conflict between the leadership and the Euro-sceptic wing of the party.

"There has been a total inability to spot the pitfalls," said one senior Tory source.

Such an open display of nerves with less than six months to go before the next election is dangerous for the Government because it exposes the fragile nature of Tory morale.

As the hurried meetings were being organised to quell the flutters, one Tory source said: "It's a mess — but we have had lots of messes."

In an extraordinary move after Prime Minister's question time, at which John Major faced open hostility from his own Euro-sceptic backbenchers, the most senior figures of the Tory backbench said they wanted a meeting with Mr Major.

The call came as around 100

Tory MPs tabled demands for a debate to block moves by the European Commission to create a stability pact, which the Tory Euro-sceptics said could undermine Britain's opt-out from the single European currency.

They delivered their message in person to the Government chief whip, Alastair Goodlad. Senior members of the Tory backbench committee told The Independent they were concerned at the failure of the Government to turn the attack on Tory sleaze against Labour over the secret funding of the private offices for Tony Blair, John Prescott and Gordon Brown.

Meanwhile, senior ministers were holding emergency meetings to prepare the way for a debate to lance a growing boil over Europe after Mr Major failed to reassure Tory MPs that no key decisions would be taken by the Chancellor, Kenneth Clarke, at a meeting of European finance ministers on European monetary union.

Tory Euro-sceptics accused Mr Major of misleading the Commons after he insisted that no key decisions would be taken on European Monetary Union at the forthcoming meeting of European economic and finance ministers (Ecofin) to be attended by Mr Clarke.

Mr Major said the decisions would be taken at the European summit in December.

John Redwood, the former Tory leadership challenger, wrote to the Chancellor last night demanding a public as-

surance that he agreed with the Prime Minister that the key decisions would be taken at the summit, and not by the Chancellor at the Ecofin meeting.

"I have written to the Chancellor asking him to confirm what the Prime Minister said — that nothing would happen at the Ecofin," he said.

Mr Redwood's supporters said the Euro-sceptics had warned the Government they would vote against it if the Prime Minister continued to resist the pressure for a full Commons debate before the Ecofin meeting early next month.

Former Paymaster General David Heathcoat-Amory, who resigned earlier this year to campaign against economic and monetary union, clashed with Mr Major in the Commons. He warned ministers that it would be "a great mistake" to ignore MPs' wishes.

"A warning has been put up — we all want to support the Government — but only if the Government looks after our freedoms," he said.

Conservative Central Office and Brian Mawhinney, MP and chairman of the Tory Party, normally would be the lightning rod for Tory backbench angst about presentation. But this criticism is being directed at the very of Downing Street.

Senior Tory MPs support the aggressive attacks on Labour by Mr Mawhinney's team, but fear that the Prime Minister's office lacks the political punch needed to counter



Sticks joined by freezing one end to another used the same stump for the first two works many collapses easier to work before sunrise and after sunset
Andy Goldsworthy, Alaska, November 1995

Today is the final day of Andy Goldsworthy's exhibition "Wood" at London's Michael Huxley Gallery.

Goldsworthy, one of Britain's most renowned artists, works entirely with organic materials — ice, leaves, thorns, stones, trees, sticks and mud — and has become internationally famous

for his creations. Goldsworthy has just opened similar shows in both San Francisco and New York.

This picture and the inscription written and laid out by the artist to go with it (left) comes from his book, "Wood", just published by Viking.

Commons probe Sinn Fein visit

John Rentoul
and David McKittrick

The Prime Minister condemned the "stunning naivety" of three Labour MPs yesterday as he announced an inquiry into claims that they had let suspected IRA members wander about unaccompanied in the House of Commons.

Responding to the report in yesterday's Independent that the three had been called in by Donald Dewar, the Labour chief whip, to explain themselves, John Major told the Commons that the government had already written to Betty Boothroyd, the Speaker.

"My understanding is that these representatives of Sinn Fein were invited to the House to meet a number of Honourable Members, that no prior notification about the meeting was given and that they were from time to time left unattended," Mr Major told MPs.

To prolonged Tory cheers, he declared: "I don't know what the outcome of this inquiry will be — but I think it is stunning naivety of any Honourable Member not to realise the connection between Sinn Fein and the IRA."

Labour leftwingers Ken Livingstone, Jeremy Corbyn and Alan Simpson met Mitchell McLaughlin, a leading figure in Sinn Fein, three

weeks ago in a cafeteria in the Palace of Westminster. They were observed by members of the security services, who reported their concern to the Speaker that one of Mr McLaughlin's party had been unaccompanied on a visit to the toilet for 20 minutes. Miss Boothroyd is believed to have referred the report to Mr Dewar.

But in an unprecedented public comment, Mr McLaughlin "categorically" denied that it had "any involvement" in the events reported yesterday. The Speaker's office had no comment to make on which part of the security services had contacted Miss Boothroyd.

Mr Livingstone yesterday accused

whoever had complained about his meeting with Sinn Fein of living in a "fantasy world". But Jack Straw, the shadow Home Secretary, said complaints of security breaches were taken "very seriously" by Labour's leadership. Mr McLaughlin made no public comment, but Republican sources were privately scornful of the idea that senior IRA activists should have been in the Commons with Mr McLaughlin, one of the party's most familiar faces on television.

A Sinn Fein source said Mr McLaughlin had noted a bald-headed man with ginger hair paying attention to him. He added: "Mitchell took him

for a walk around the place. The guy was keeping an eye on him, so he went for a wee walk, taking your man with him." Mr McLaughlin's companions in the Commons were senior Sinn Fein member Bairbre de Brun, together with Frank O'Neill, a London-based republican sympathiser.

As head of the party's international department, Ms de Brun is a well-known Sinn Fein figure who has made many television appearances. Mr O'Neill is said to be a member of the Wolfe Tone Society but not a member of Sinn Fein. Neither has ever been linked with the IRA army council.

Sinn Fein's tour, page 2

QUICKLY

Emu fears
Germany and France sought to calm nerves over the planned European single currency by insisting that the mark-franc exchange rate does not need to be changed. The move was designed to quell speculation that the franc might be devalued before the scheduled launch of the euro in 1999. Page 15

Tags for children
Electronic tags could be used to exclude juvenile offenders as young as 10 from sports events and shopping arcades, monitor them at school and place them under house arrest. Penal reformers and probation officers described the proposals as unwelcome. Page 6

Grants winnings
Teenage pop groups, graffiti artists, jugglers and acrobats will be able to apply for grants from the National Lottery fund. It is the first time people as well as buildings are eligible for money from the lottery. Page 5

Supermarket jobs
Safeway is to create 5,200 jobs to staff 30 new supermarkets, half to be built next year and half the next year. Page 22

Eurotunnel chief admits breach in safety code

JAMES CUSICK
Calais

Eurotunnel admitted for the first time yesterday that safety officials knew on Monday night that one of the Channel train wagons was smouldering but planned not to stop the train until it left the tunnel.

Why it stopped there instead, putting staff and passengers' lives at risk, will be one of the crucial questions for the inquiries investigating the fire which has severely dented public confidence in the tunnel.

Eurotunnel's joint director Alain Bertrand, speaking in Calais yesterday, confirmed that two security guards had noticed the train "if not quite on fire, then smouldering" metres before it entered the tunnel.

Mr Bertrand said that this information was relayed to the control centre at Calais. Once inside the tunnel, other safety



journey [some 50 kilometres] and go on to exit in England. He repeated: "It was not supposed to stop."

More wagons from train were brought out of the tunnel early yesterday morning. The charred and mangled remains of the lorries inside the steel lattice of the freight wagons gave a horrific indication of the intense inferno they had faced inside the confines of the tunnel.

Melted wheels and covers, twisted and peeled cargo, torn away fibreglass, tons of damaged cargo and a severe stretch of smoke clung to the first few lorries. Then came the wagons which were nearer the blaze. One looked as though it had simply melted, a cargo of pineapples barbecued to ash, its wheels melted, leaving only a crude skeleton of a vehicle.

For Eurotunnel the worry now is: if this is the condition of the wagons five lorries away

from the epicentre of the blaze, what can the condition of the remaining five wagons still left in the tunnel now be? The sight of them is likely to further horrify potential passengers.

The Inter Governmental Safety Commission continued meeting in Calais for another lengthy session yesterday. There is no sign from the Commission that they are nearer to allowing either car or tourist passenger trains back into the tunnel.

Only bulk goods trains have been given permission to use the remaining clear tunnel.

In the week ahead, Eurotunnel will have to persuade the Commission they have already learned lessons from the fire.

British firefighters argued strongly that the breakdown in communications might have been caused by an over-complex chain of responsibility which caused a "balk up" at the English end of the tunnel.

CONTENTS

The Broadsheet	
Business & City	22-28
Comment	19-21
Foreign News	12-17
Gazette	18
Home News	2-10
Law Report	18
Leaders and Letters	19
Obituaries	18
Shares	26
Sport	29-32
Unit Trusts	28
Section Two	
Architecture	6,7
Arts Reviews	19
Classical Music	16-18
Crossword	22
John Lytle	3
Listings	20, 21
Pop Music	23, 24
Radio and TV	23, 24
Style	4, 5
Weather	22

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Modest potatoes see off cheeky Spanish

Boing! And Aylesbury Tory David Lidington sprang from his green fly pad to question an agriculture minister about fruit shapes and sizes. Should they not, he asked, be a matter for the consumer, not for bureaucrats? Boing! he sprang back again and slumped - spent - his long legs akimbo and his head resting gently on the weaselly Nigel Egan's shoulder. Indeed, replied Tim Boswell (one of the small legion of ministers who protect our agriculture and defend our fisheries), he could reassure the honourable gentleman that the "small orange cox's pippin is safe in our hands".

It is a strange legacy of the post-war years of austerity that farmers and fishers, who employ



DAVID AARONOVITCH

a quarter of a million Britons all told, should have a ministry and a question time all of their own, when financial services (a million employees), has neither. But this arrangement does make for moments of levity. For, no sooner had Mr Lidington's question been satisfactorily resolved, than Peter Atkinson (Con, Hexham) rose to ask

about the "establishment of a modest potato regime". What is this? Government by modest potatoes, presumably. In the last 70 years we have witnessed fascist regimes, communist regimes, military regimes and theocratic regimes (very few of them modest, as it happens), but not potato regimes. One imagines that such a government would be solid, earthy, dull and stodgy. All the members of the cabinet would be dressed in brown sacks, but would have different coloured arms, legs and noses.

The minister did not clarify, but rather confused the issue by referring to similar extant "fruit and vegetable regimes". The

first probably refers to the city council of San Francisco; the second to what we have in Britain at the moment. It is the latter that Mr Atkinson would like to see ousted and substituted with his favoured potato regime.

The potatoes would certainly put a stop to the abuses of Britain's hospitality cited by David Harris (Con, St Ives). He told the shocking tale of how a Nimrod aircraft had lifted a Spanish fisherman to the Cornish mainland, only to discover on arrival that he wasn't even ill! (Caramba!) And Spanish fishermen were "turning up in Cornwall and registering for optional insurance numbers" (Madre de Dios!). You can imagine them waxing their

moustaches, adjusting their earrings and pulling on their cigarillos, as they lounged in the social security office queue, seeking an easy life on the British dole.

But even this is preferable to their habit of poaching our fish, while (according to Tony Baldry, the minister responsible), "masquerading as UK fishermen". They do this by shaving, slipping on Old Spice to hide the smell of garlic and calling everybody "mate".

Barry Legg (Con, SW Milton Keynes) urged the present regime to "take a leaf out of Sir Francis Drake's book, when dealing with the Armada..." And? "And press these matters at the IGC until they are satisfactorily resolved". I took the

heavy tome on English history down from the shelf, and looked up "Drake, Sir Francis". And sure enough, Mr Legg was right. When, in 1588, the Duke of Medina Sidonia and his squadrons were sighted off the Lizard, Sir Francis calmly finished off his game of bowls, collected his briefcase, nipped on Eurostar and took his seat at the IGC. There, as Professor A.L. Elton reveals, Drake "pressed the matter to a satisfactory conclusion".

Subsequent mythology has embellished the event with nonsensical flourishes like fire-ships and storms. An incoming potato regime (modest or immodest, it makes no difference) will put an end to such inaccuracies.

500ft big wheel rolls ahead for millennium

The plan for a 500ft "Millennium Wheel" on the south bank of the Thames in London was approved by the Government last night.

John Gummer, Secretary of State for the Environment, described the £10m plan as "an inspired idea" for marking the millennium and said he had no plans to call in the planning application. The project would provide "unparalleled, once-in-a-lifetime views of the heart of the capital", he added in a Commons reply.

The proposal, by the architects David Marks and Julia Barfield, is being funded privately with the backing of British Airways. The wheel will be in Jubilee Gardens next to the former County Hall. It will be used for five years, spanning the millennium. Picture, page 6

Anti-rabies controls reviewed

The Government is looking again at its rabies control policy, taking account of the latest scientific information, Angela Browning, junior agriculture minister, told the Commons.

But she refused to comment on speculation that the Prime Minister has asked for a report on the current rabies and quarantine laws by the end of this month.

"If new moves are decided upon, an announcement will be made. But our paramount need is to protect the health of animals and people in Britain," she said.

Breakthrough for sick miners

Thousands of former miners with crippling chest diseases and former building workers afflicted with asbestosis will benefit from changes to the industrial injuries scheme announced by the Government.

After years of campaigning by miners' MPs, Peter Lilley, Secretary of State for Social Security, has changed the rules for compensation for pneumoconiosis with chronic bronchitis and emphysema. A wider range of occupations will also now qualify for compensation for asbestos-induced mesothelioma.

Barrie Clement

New hope on prostate cancer

Scientists are closing in on genes implicated in prostate cancer, which affects about one in five men, and the most common type of cancer. The developments could lead to new therapies, or genetic screening against the disease. A team at the National Institutes for Health in Bethesda, Maryland, US, said in the journal *Science* that it had narrowed the location of a gene mutation linked to hereditary prostate cancer. Millennium Pharmaceuticals of Cambridge, Massachusetts, said that it had identified the gene implicated in type II diabetes. Charles Arthur

Moving home risk for young

Scientists have provided further evidence that childhood leukaemia may be a rare response to infection, and that this could explain apparent "clusters" of the disease which have been reported since the 1970s. A team from Oxford University found "significant" trends in the incidence of certain types of leukaemia with the proportion of children new to a district. "In areas with high levels of inward migration, young children would tend to be infected earlier, producing a raised level of leukaemia in early childhood," they say in the *British Medical Journal*. Liz Hunt

Farmer let 400 deer die

Deer on a farm "dropped like flies" through disease and malnutrition, a court was told. Around 400 died in seven months at Tremorland Farm, Cardinham, Cornwall.

The manager of the 220-acre farm, Robert Jasper, 40, pleaded guilty at Bodmin magistrates to causing unnecessary suffering. He earlier admitted falsifying records, and was fined a total of £500. The prosecution was brought after a police and RSPCA investigation.

The farm was run by Galtee Deer Care of Cork, southern Ireland.

Fumes hazard for families

A council was fined a total of £44,000 after tenants were put at risk from poisonous gas fumes.

Camden Council in north London was prosecuted after gas fumes to up to 200 fires in living rooms of flats were disconnected by workmen and gas installations were not inspected.

Clerkenwell Magistrates Court was told the council was let down by private contractors but it accepted responsibility. Kurt Coelho, of the Health and Safety Executive, said the sub-contractors had disconnected vents connecting the flats without telling the council. These had not been re-connected when the work was finished.

Mr Coelho said: "It could have led to carbon monoxide poisoning to anyone in the living room."

Pierre White scoops honour

The chef Marco Pierre White won the *Egon Ronay Guide* 1997 Restaurant of the Year title for his establishment in the basement of Hyde Park Hotel, London. The restaurant was cited for its sense of individuality in a grand hotel setting.

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Inquest told of man's screams as blows fell

A defenceless black man, who later died in custody, screamed in agony as a group of police officers "hammered" him with their heavy batons, an inquest jury was told yesterday.

"I could hear the thud of the blows," Susan Price recalled. The mother-of-three, who wiped tears from her eyes as she graphically described how suspected burglar Wayne Douglas had been pounced on like "dogs getting hold of a cat", said she had no idea how many times he was struck.

"But it seemed to go on for ages. He was screaming, I was very distressed at what was happening."

Suddenly his cries stopped, and minutes later she heard the handcuffed 25-year-old "whimpering" as he was carried unmoving, like a "trussed up chicken" out of a children's park in Brixton, south west London, where he had been caught.

Former postman Mr Douglas was then thrown face down onto the floor of a police van "like a sack of potatoes".

That caused the man to cry

out in pain and when a police officer then knelt on his back he once more shouted: "Aargh!"

"There was nothing that man was doing that justified him being treated in that way," said Ms Price told the jury.

She was giving evidence on the fourth day of the inquest into Mr Douglas's death just over an hour after his arrest on 5 December last year.

Two weeks later a protest rally outside Brixton Police Station sparked widespread rioting in the area which left a £1 million trail of damage.

The hearing at Southwark Crown Court has heard that a hunt for witnesses to evidence surrounding Mr Douglas's arrest met "a wall of silence and fear" from local residents reluctant to help police.

Ms Price said she, too, had been "frightened" of the police and had not wanted to come to court. This prompted coroner Sir Montague Levine to assure her she had nothing to worry about.

The hearing was adjourned until tomorrow.



One of the lorries which was destroyed in Monday's Channel Tunnel conflagration sitting on the French side yesterday after being retrieved by rescue crews

Derry car bomb adds to fear of new violence

David McKittrick
Ireland Correspondent

Army bomb disposal experts yesterday successfully defused a large car bomb which had been left close to an RUC station in Londonderry by a republican splinter group.

Although the device was not the work of the IRA it has increased general apprehension that Northern Ireland could be sliding back towards violence on a larger scale.

The car bomb was dealt with by a motorised bomb disposal robot which managed to blow the device apart without setting off its main charge. The car was subsequently found to contain around 600lb of home-made explosives, an amount which

would have caused serious damage over a wide area.

A warning call had been received just before noon from the "IRA Continuity Army Council", which has been responsible for sporadic bomb attacks over the last two years. Most of its activities have ended in failure, but the organisation, though small, is clearly becoming more ambitious.

The group is said by security sources to have a close relationship with Republican Sinn Fein, the party set up 10 years ago by the veteran republican Ruairi O Bradaigh. He broke away from Sinn Fein because he believed it was moving from militarism into politics.

The group's most destructive act, in July of this year, was to

blow up a well-known hotel in Co Fermanagh. In early October an attempt to plant a car bomb, containing 250lb of explosives, in Belfast city centre failed.

The incident caused concern in security circles, however, since it appeared to represent the organisation's first major operation in Belfast. The RUC and army will be reviewing security measures in the run-up to Christmas.

Among scores of offices and businesses evacuated while the bomb was being defused yesterday was the office of SDLP leader John Hume, who is MP for the city. Mr Hume said: "The people responsible are the enemies of everyone. The people engaged in this activity are

total enemies of the people of Derry and Ireland. They have no friends here."

Mr Hume added that he believed a new IRA ceasefire could be brought about.

He declared: "I have been in intensive dialogue with Gerry Adams and I know that a ceasefire can take place. I also know that it is for real. I am quite prepared to stick my whole reputation on that."

"The opportunity now exists to bring total and lasting peace, and I believe the British government can bring that about."

Sinn Fein leaders have recently said that proposals had been conveyed to London, but that no reply had yet been received from the Government.

How Sinn Fein strolled through Westminster

Colin Brown looks at Labour's embarrassment over the republicans' controversial tour of the corridors of power

Donald Dewar, the Labour chief whip, read the riot act individually to three Labour MPs - Ken Livingstone, Jeremy Corbyn, and Alan Simpson - in his room off the members' lobby.

The Chief Whip said it was a matter of some sensitivity. It had been drawn to his attention the MPs had put the House at some considerable and unacceptable risk.

A Labour source said: "He had been informed by the security services that people with Mitchell McLaughlin were directly involved with the IRA or connected with the IRA."

"He said this House had been the target in the past and could well be in the present and the future," said the source. Mr Dewar told the MPs that having the Sinn Fein members in the Commons had placed their Labour colleagues at risk. One of the three said: "He told me I had

allowed them to roam freely around Parliament and the security services had closely monitored their movements and wanted him to know of the risk. He appeared to have a report."

"My response was just to point out that Mitchell McLaughlin had initiated it. He had already met a large number of members and that I simply had fitted into a slot where I was available that afternoon and they were already involved in other meetings."

"Floods" the café off the Great Hall used by the Commons police, seemed the perfect place for Sinn Fein leaders to meet MPs. It was quiet, and once inside the security ring around the Commons, it was easy for MPs to come and go.

The security service, MIS, yesterday took the highly unusual step of issuing a statement denying that they had contacted Labour about the Sinn Fein visit or had been involved in a surveillance operation at the Commons. Labour MPs had been under the impression that Mr Dewar was acting on information supplied by MIS.

A security source said: "MIS, categorically denies that it had any involvement in the events alleged in the story. It is not true that security service surveillance officers followed anyone into the House of Commons. And it's not true that the security service complained to the Labour Party. We were not involved in any way."

Selected Labour MPs had

been invited by Mr McLaughlin to join them to discuss their agenda for getting Sinn Fein into the Ulster peace talks.

They did not realise they were being watched from a nearby table by a group of security officers. From the House of Commons dressed in casual clothes.

The importance of security was etched in the walls at the police canteen. The stonework is still scarred by an IRA bomb attack more than a decade ago.

Mr McLaughlin and his two friends had spent a busy day touring all the main MPs' office blocks, where they had meetings with individual Labour MPs in their private office suites. They had been to Millbank, One Parliament Street and the Nor-

man Shaw building within the shadow Big Ben.

"They were trying to let people know that a lot of work was going on to reconstruct the ceasefire. What they were really afraid of was that the Tories would for political reasons ensure that the hurdles were raised for Sinn Fein to enter the cross-party talks."

"They wanted people to understand the real danger. It would strengthen the hands of those who didn't want a ceasefire," said one source.

Decommissioning of IRA weapons - the issue on which the peace talks could founder - was hardly discussed. But the Labour MPs who met the Sinn Fein group found they had all given the same message: there

would have to be a ceasefire before Sinn Fein could hope to get into the talks.

One MP who met them said: "We left them under no illusions that the left in Britain were absolutely adamant that without the restoration of the ceasefire, there would be no peace process and they needed to take that message back to the hard men in the IRA."

"We all told them that what the IRA were doing was eroding the traditional support Sinn Fein had in Britain. We all told them the same thing: they would be throwing away the public case by seeking to unleash another wave of indiscriminate bombings."

Mr McLaughlin also had an agenda. "He wanted Tony Blair to distance himself from John Major by standing still. He didn't want Blair to try to match Major by putting more hurdles in the way of peace."

If you'd like to understand what's happening on Sci-Fi TV, Radio Times Sci-Fi page will tell you everything you need to know, and it's not in Klingon!

RadioTimes

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Actor shows his own play's the thing - but can he upstage the award-winning Emma Thompson?

Alas, poor Shakespeare: Branagh rewrites Hamlet



No contest: Emma Thompson and Kate Winslett in the award-winning *Sense and Sensibility* (left), and Branagh with Winslett in the director's forthcoming film version of *Hamlet*

Marianne Macdonald
Media Correspondent

Those who thought Shakespeare could not be improved will be in for a surprise next Thursday, when Kenneth Branagh's long-awaited screenplay of *Hamlet* hits the bookshops. It offers the first and rather alarming insight into the three-and-a-half hour film which opens on Valentine's Day and which stars Branagh as the deranged Dane and Kate Winslett as Ophelia. While the screenplay's cover credits the Bard's input, Branagh's name is in larger type, presumably in deference to the trouble Shakespeare's new collaborator has taken improving and adding to the play. Admittedly, the adaptation, published by Chatto & Windus, uses the First Folio in its entirety. But after almost every speech, Branagh has added his own thoughts on the meaning and motivation.

'At one point in the play Branagh describes the Danish king as going into Norman Schwarzkopf mode'

Some of his comments — none of which are heard — are bizarre and others surreal in the context of one of Shakespeare's greatest tragedies. At one point he describes the Danish King as going "into Norman Schwarzkopf mode", while after a gravedigger's speech he interjects: "Says Judge Ito. Later, the King and Queen are shown in bed. Gertrude and Claudius have not been dis-

the President on the way to a White House press conference."

His crass approach contrasts embarrassingly with his estranged wife's Oscar-winning adaptation of another classic — Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*, brought in by Emma Thompson at about half the length and with considerably more elegance. Coincidentally, it also co-starred Kate Winslett.

Some of Branagh's comments are just off-the-wall. After Hamlet's speech — "I could be bounded in a nutshell and count myself a King of infinite space, were it not that I have bad dreams" — Shakespeare's helpful collaborator remarks: "Oh no you don't. We've got you sussed."

Before the players perform to

Hamlet, we learn: "They're all terribly excited. This, although unusual, looks as if it will be a good gig."

When Hamlet tells Ophelia that a woman's love is brief, Branagh un-

derlines the point: "Bloody hell. Everyone knows who that's meant for."

When Guildenstern reproves Hamlet's discourtesy — "If it shall please you to make me a wholesome answer, I will do your mother's

commandment" — the author exclaims: "Ooo. A bit narked are we?"

It is hard to know which reads more badly, Branagh's statements of the obvious or his musings on mo-

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commandment — the author exclaims: "Ooo. A bit narked are we?" It is hard to know which reads more badly, Branagh's statements of the obvious or his musings on mo-

Branagh observes: "Oh. Metaphors. Thank Christ for that." And during the gravedigging scene, Branagh urges: "Get on with it then, Einstein."

Branagh's low interjections after every fragment of dialogue makes it seem as if he is boorishly participating in every scene, this week's *Times Literary Supplement* cuttingly observes.

It adds: "After a few pages of such stuff, the commentary begins to read as though it is the work of a mysterious interloper into the play, an extra and rather louché character, someone from *EastEnders*, say, who has found himself transported to Elsinore and left to make what sense he can of what on earth is going on as he lurks at the back of the set."

Children want loving New Dads, not out-at-work lads

Glenda Cooper

Children want their fathers to be "new men", helping with the housework, taking an equal role in child-care and attending the birth of any brothers or sisters.

A study of 600 teenagers in east London found they wanted an emotionally committed, close and caring relationship with their fathers, whom they considered central to the welfare of the home.

More than nine out of 10 children said that a father should be present at the birth of their child and 70 per cent considered that he should take paternity leave afterwards.

Fathers should also share domestic duties and still contribute economically to the family if the mother and father divorced, the survey reported in the *Family Policy Bulletin* found. Children still saw fathers as

the main breadwinners though, with one in three saying that earning money was the most important activity for them, followed by giving care and love and being involved in domestic duties.

Most of the children in the study lived with both their natural parents. They were asked to keep daily diaries, which included the time spent with their parents and what activities they had done with them.

While friends were the most commonly mentioned people in the diaries, three-quarters mentioned their mothers and 65 per cent their fathers at least once a week. Half the children in lone-parent households did not mention their absent fathers.

In two-parent households children reported spending more time with their mothers than their fathers every day — just under six hours compared to four-and-a-half hours.

At weekends boys reported spending more time with their fathers than girls did and less time with their mothers.

Contact with fathers is greatest when both parents are working full-time, possibly because fathers may often work longer in households where they are the sole earner.

Watching television together was the most common activity for children and their parents, but talking to each other is said to be the most common father-child activity on Sundays.

Going out with fathers is more common for boys than girls.

"Girls were more dissatisfied than boys with the amount of time fathers gave them, got less and were more likely to feel that their fathers understood them," said Margaret O'Brien, professor of family studies and author of the report. "In the main, children reported being emotionally closer to their mothers

than their fathers. Fathers were chosen as the first port of call for only a minority of children and in three distinct areas: money, difficulty with mother and sport."

While children looked less favourably on full-time working mothers than those who worked part-time or stayed at home, fathers' employment habits seemed to have no impact on perceived levels of closeness or understanding.

"The father-child axis is in a state of flux, some might say confusion," said Professor O'Brien. "Modern children want their fathers to be around, to share domestic space and familial concerns. But they don't appear to 'need' him in quite the same way as the mother. To what extent emergent employment and cultural patterns will change and shape new forms of relating between men and their children is yet to be discovered."

Old snaps make new Beatle film

Esther Leach

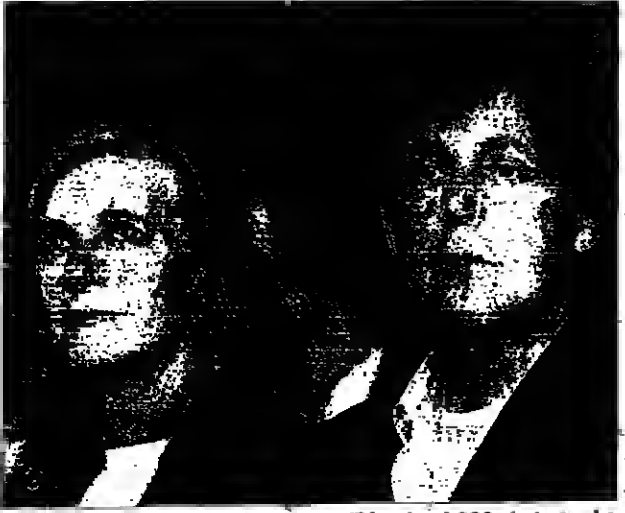
A new Beatles film is to be made from thousands of photographs taken by Linda McCartney.

It will have a soundtrack of Beatles songs that have never been released before, including tapes of a secret jamming session recorded at the London Roundhouse in 1968.

Paul McCartney is helping his wife to edit at least 4,000 pictures of the group, none of which have been shown publicly before, to make a film known as a photofilm.

Linda McCartney took the pictures between her first meeting with the Beatles in 1967 at the time of the release of the Sergeant Pepper album, and the break-up of the group in 1970. She was allowed access when other photographers were barred, and her pictures show the Beatles at work and at ease.

The McCartneys decided to make the Beatles photofilm after Paul created a new film system last year in which he took



Don't let it be: the McCartneys' film will involve 4,000 photographs

two reels of Linda's pictures of the Grateful Dead and using computer technology made the still photographs move.

It is understood the Beatles film, not expected before the end of 1997, will reveal a rich and intimate photographic archive of the group.

A spokesman for the couple said: "Linda's pictures cover a dark period in the time of the Beatles when photographers were rarely invited in. It was the time leading up to the break-up of the group, and covered the making of their last three albums."

"It was a time of the creation and recording of songs like 'Hey Jude', 'Let It Be' and 'The Long And Winding Road'. The pictures are not posed but are informal and unguarded, showing the Beatles inside and outside the recording studios. It will be an extraordinary film."

He said that Linda McCartney always had a camera with her and continues to take photographs today. "While most women carry a handbag, she carries a camera," he added.

The announcement of the new film comes on the eve of the opening of an exhibition of Linda McCartney's photography called "Roadworks" at the National Museum of Photography, Film and Television in Bradford. She has a parallel show at the International Centre of Photography in New York.

The exhibition is a new collection of pictures shot during early 30 years on the road touring with her husband and his bands.

Will you reunite a family separated in the chaos in Central Africa?



During the long trek home from Zaire, thousands of children have become separated from their parents.

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But each day, more and more children are arriving at the centres, having found themselves totally alone in the world.

We desperately need your help. Your kindness could reunite a family separated in the mayhem in Central Africa. As we approach Christmas, a time for families, isn't that something worth doing today?

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Fearful doctors stand in way of home births

Liz Hunt
Health Editor

Most family doctors still oppose home births despite Government support for them, growing demand from women for this type of delivery and strong evidence that the majority of such births are safe for mother and child.

A new study suggests that as many as 10 per cent of women would like a home birth but "had obstacles placed in their way" by GPs who felt it was an "inappropriate" request.

Almost a third of women in the study who had planned a home delivery were made to change their

plans and go to hospital for the birth. In half these cases there was no medical reason for this change.

Less than four per cent of women in the study had a home birth which was supported by an enthusiastic GP, and one in ten women had to change practitioners in order to give birth as they preferred.

GPs, it was reported, had "reservations" about half of the booking requests for a home birth, and many actively discouraged their patients from this choice. Two thirds of women said they had not been offered any option about the place of birth.

One woman tried 12 different doctors but could not find one pre-

pared to provide care during labour, despite the fact she was a suitable candidate, having given birth successfully at home previously without a doctor being present.

The study, carried out by a team at Newcastle University, concluded that the difficulty women face in obtaining a home birth is largely due to GPs' fear of complications influenced by their experience of problematic births during their hospital training. The availability of "flying squad" support in the event of a crisis and an emergency admission to hospital was also a concern.

Writing in tomorrow's issue of the

British Medical Journal, the researchers say: "Probably [GP reluctance] also rises from a misunderstanding of their role and of the accountability of midwives as well as from an exaggerated idea of what is expected from general practitioners, who despite obstetric training are unlikely to have maintained their skills."

Midwives, who were also questioned for the study, reported a failure of professional support from doctors and a shortage of adequate equipment such as mobile phones, and cylinders of nitrous oxide anaesthetic gas.

Women told the researchers that they liked home birth because they

felt in control and this positive feeling persisted even in those women who had to be transferred to hospital from home during labour.

In the 1960s a third of all births occurred at home but the incident fell to an all-time low in 1987 when it accounted for just 0.9 per cent of all deliveries. Nine years on, the figure has risen to just under two per cent, despite a groundbreaking Government report in 1993, *Changing Childbirth*, which suggested that it should be an option for all women.

The Newcastle researchers investigated 256 women in the Northern region who expected to deliver in 1993 and whose request for a

home birth was known. Five miscarried. Of the remainder, 57 per cent delivered at home. There were 17 per cent Caesarean sections but no perinatal deaths. About 30 per cent of women were referred to hospital for delivery before labour, and 14 per cent were admitted from home during labour.

In a second study in the *BMJ*, the Northern Region Perinatal Mortality Survey Co-ordinating Group reviewed all perinatal deaths in the region associated with planned or unplanned births outside hospital between 1981 and 1994.

There were 134 deaths in 3,466 births outside hospital, about four times the death rate in hospital.

However, 97 per cent of deaths occurred in women who were booked for hospital delivery or who had no pre-arranged delivery plan, confirming that unplanned home births were hazardous.

The perinatal outcome for planned homebirths was better for all women giving birth in the region, a finding confirmed by Swiss and Dutch studies of home birth in the same issue of the *BMJ* which conclude that home births are extremely safe for healthy women at low risk of complications. Women who opted for hospital births were at higher risk of induced labour, Caesarean section, forceps, vacuum extraction and episiotomy.

'I said I'll have the baby on the sitting room floor'

After a difficult first labour, Sarah Jewell decided to stay home second time around

My first labour lasted 36 hours and ended up with me lying flat on my back on a hospital bed with a drip to speed up the contractions stuck into my hand and a foetal heartbeat monitor tied around my belly.

The pain was so intense and lasted for so long that I felt very apprehensive about booking in for a home birth for my second child, but I also knew that I wanted to try and avoid the whole horrible hospital experience.

When my waters broke in the middle of the night, a week before due date, I thought I was in for another incredibly long labour. But by the time my midwife arrived an hour later the contractions were so strong and frequent that I was unable to move from the position I had found the most comfortable - kneeling over the sofa in the sitting room.

The midwife examined me and to my surprise said that I was already in established

labour and that the baby would be with us soon.

She asked where I wanted to have it and I said just here, on the sitting room floor, and my husband laid out a huge plastic dust sheet - the only thing that I had bought in preparation for a home birth - over the carpet.

I grabbed the nozzle of the cylinder of gas and air that the midwife had brought with her and sucked hard to try and cope with the increasingly bad pain of each contraction.

I felt a moment's panic at the thought that this was it, I really was at home and giving birth and there was no way now that I could get in an ambulance or go to hospital. But my fears rapidly turned to elation when the midwife said that I was ready to start pushing the baby out.

The intensity of the labour was matched by the intensity of peace and quiet in my own sitting room.



Sarah Jewell and her new baby. At home, with the lights dimmed, made it a very special experience

Photograph: David Rose

This was what made having a home birth so special. In the silence of the night with the lights dimmed and the midwife beside me, I could totally concentrate on working through the pain of each contraction and I could even

visualise where the baby's head was inside me.

I felt relaxed and in control and when I felt the urge to push I gave one massive heave and then felt an incredible, explosive "pop".

"That's it, the head is out," said the midwife. My sense of joy and relief was overwhelming and on the next contraction the body slithered out and she said: "It's a girl".

Minutes later my toddler came in

the room and said that he didn't like the cream (the vernix) on her head and he went off with my husband to make tea for us all.

Perhaps the greatest luxury of a home birth is not having to be moved

to a swelteringly hot maternity ward full of screaming babies.

An hour later, after a hot bath, I was lying snuggled up in my own bed with my baby in my arms and a big smile of contentment on my face.

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Licensed to scribble: lottery to give funds to graffiti artists

David Lister
Arts News Editor

Teenage pop groups, graffiti artists, jugglers and acrobats will all count as "good causes" and be able to apply for National Lottery money under a new scheme announced yesterday.

The scheme, to be administered by the Arts Council and approved by the Government, marks the biggest change to the way the lottery rewards good causes since it began.

It means that for the first time people as well as buildings can get lottery money. Actual artists – singers, actors or circus performers – can receive funds. Lottery money will also be used to keep ticket prices down at theatres, operas and concerts.

Applicants for the money will have to raise some "partnership funding" themselves from private sources, but last night that task was eased by a dramatic gesture from impresario Sir Cameron Mackintosh. He announced he is giving £500,000

over the next five years to help partnership funding.

Arts For Everyone, as the new scheme is known, will come into force next January, and £20m of lottery money will be spent on it in the first year. It will give lottery grants of between £500 and £500,000 to applicants that will range from youth groups painting murals on legally supplied sites around an inner city area, to theatre in education projects, to hire costs of studios for young rock bands, to ticket price reductions.

Questioned whether lottery money would go to fund young people to paint graffiti in public places, Tony Robinson, vice president of Equity who has been involved in setting up the scheme, said: "The short answer is yes. But not for illegal work. The idea of freeing people up to do graffiti art is good. It's a dangerous scheme in that it will be easy to write knocking stories about and trivialise."

The new direction in the lottery reflects the anxiety felt by

both Government and the Arts Council that lottery money confined to capital projects such as building renovations was not being seen to help actual artists, young people or amateur

groups such as amateur dramatics or music societies.

The new scheme has two streams of money on offer: the main programme, which will award between £500 and

£500,000 to established organisations, both professional and amateur, for new arts activities; and an "Express" scheme which will give between £500 and

£5,000 to small groups who may never have received any kind of funding at all.

The idea, said Mary Allen, secretary general of the Arts Council, "is that Arts For Everyone will allow us to com-

plement regular funding we give to arts organisations. Through working with audiences, and commissioning more new work, they will be able to carry on creating the art which

makes this country the envy of the world. We will give money to community groups and outreach work: for audiences and participants, and getting money into the grass roots of arts."



Graffiti at disused flats in Hulme, Manchester. Graffiti artists will be able to apply for grants under Arts for Everyone, funded by the National Lottery

Photograph: News Team

Heritage chief warns against further cuts

Stephen Goodwin
Heritage Correspondent

Sir Jocelyn Stevens, the chairman of English Heritage, yesterday kept the Government guessing over whether he will stay on as the charismatic keeper of the nation's treasures or quit in protest at spending cuts.

With the Budget less than a week away, Sir Jocelyn made no response to a very public invitation by Virginia Bottomley, Secretary of State for Heritage, to serve for a further three years.

English Heritage was peering into "a potential abyss", he said at the launch of the quango's annual report and accounts. This year EH got a Government grant of £108m, but it has been instructed to plan for a £45m reduction in real terms over the next four years.

"We are very near the point where further cuts would put us in an impossible situation," the chairman said. One set of ca-

sualties could be England's cathedrals which last year received £4.3m for urgent repair and conservation work.

Sir Jocelyn's worry is that with heritage projects increasingly funded from the lottery, ministers are forgetting EH's on-going commitments, including its work with local authorities, churches, stately home owners and its advisory role.

He even speculated on the "nightmare" of EH going bankrupt. Some 85 per cent of its funding is already committed at the start of each year. If cuts were severe, EH might not be able to honour its promise of money when, for example, a home owner had completed work on a new roof. "We would be defaulting on our payments. It's horrible to contemplate. The Commissioners and I could not sit there and accept that because the credibility of the organisation would be at stake."

After a lavish breakfast in the redeveloped Oxo Tower overlooking the Thames, Mrs Bottomley asked Sir Jocelyn, aged 64, to stay on in the £44,000 a year post when his five-year term ends in March. The invitation was made "on behalf of the Government and the Prime Minister", she said.

But the former managing director of Express newspapers made no response. "It was a slight surprise. I have never been propositioned in public like that before," he said afterwards. He would like to stay on see his vision of a Stonehenge Millennium Park become reality but he sees "no point" if English Heritage cannot do its job.



Stevens: Kept Government guessing on his future

Prison sex visits would keep peace

Jason Bennett
Crime Correspondent

Schemes to allow sex between inmates and their partners during visiting hours were praised by a chief prison inspector yesterday.

Clive Fairweather, Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland, said that allowing "conjugal rights" for offenders could help keep Scottish jails peaceful. His annual report highlights a Canadian system, in which families are allowed to make three-day visits to private chalets within the jail – which can include sexual relations.

But he draws back from recommending a similar system for Scotland as public opinion would be opposed to it.

The report recommends

doubling visiting times for prisoners in Scotland in a bid to help offenders keep calm and drug-free. The report said it was impressed by the Canadian example, although it believes there could be a more "dignified" conjugal visiting system than those already operating in some European countries.

It called for improved family visiting facilities, arguing that families are the most important factor in helping prisoners break the habit of re-offending when they are released.

The question of sexual relations within jails was raised in a chief inspector's visit to Maidstone, in Kent, in June, when it was reported that prisoners were engaging in intimate behaviour with partners in front of other families and children.

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IND/1

Issued on behalf of the Minister for Disabled People

politics

Tags to monitor errant children

Jason Bennetto
Crime Correspondent

Electronic tags could be used to exclude juvenile offenders as young as 10 from sports events and shopping arcades, monitor them at school and place them under house arrest, the Government announced yesterday.

The proposed scheme to monitor young criminals via wrist and ankle tags was described as unworkable by penal reformers and probation officers. Labour and the Liberal Democrats accused the Government of using the announcement to distract attention from a highly critical Audit Commission report that describes the juvenile justice system as ineffective and expensive. One of the report's key recommendations was to divert a large proportion of juvenile offenders out of the courts.

As predicted earlier this month in *The Independent*, the Home Office yesterday announced an amendment to the Crime Bill to provide courts with a new punishment to tag offenders aged 10 to 15 as part of a curfew order. In outlining the proposals the Home Office minister David Maclean indicated that the new sentence could be used in a wide range of areas, not just confining teenagers to their homes.

He said: "We believe that curfew orders could be an effective way of keeping young offenders off the streets or away from places such as shopping centres and football matches, where they may be up to no good. Young offenders could be

ordered to stay at home at night or at certain times during the weekend. They could also be required to be at school during school hours.

"Electronic tagging will detect immediately whether the offender is breaking the curfew."

Under the proposal the curfew period would last between 2 and 12 hours for up to three months. Courts can include in any curfew order a "bind-over" condition on the child's parents or guardian. If the order is breached the mother or father would be liable to a fine. Typical crimes which might result in tagging include vandalism and minor public order offences.

Mary Honeyball, general secretary of the Association of Chief Officers of Probation, said: "If a child is constantly pushing against authority, breaching a curfew enforced by a tag simply becomes another opportunity to cock a snook at the adult world, and the tag itself will be worn as a trophy."

Up to 50,000 young offenders could be eligible for the tags, although only a tiny proportion would expect to be fitted.

The Government also proposes to introduce tough new penalties on 10- to 17-year-olds who commit indecent assault on adult males. Under an amendment to the Children and Young Persons Act 10- to 14-year-olds, who currently cannot be jailed for the offence, would receive a maximum 10-year sentence. Offenders aged 15 to 17, who at present have a maximum of two years' detention, will also face a 10-year maximum.

Nolan calls for greater openness

Anthony Bevins
Political Editor

A direct and defiant challenge to the Government to make some civil servants openly accountable to Parliament was made by Lord Nolan last night.

The chairman of the official Committee on Standards in Public Life suggested in a lecture at Warwick University that the hive-off of Whitehall work to agencies had blurred lines of accountability that were already weak.

Concerned about that problem, the Commons Public Service Committee recently announced: "The obligation to provide full information and to explain the actions of Government in Parliament means that ministers should allow civil servants to give an account in Parliament through select committees where appropriate - particularly where ministers have formed delegated functions to them."

But the Government replied a fortnight ago that it was not prepared "to breach the long-standing basic principle that civil servants in Next Steps agencies, give an account to Parliament on behalf of the ministers whom they serve."

Summing up the Govern-

ment position, Lord Nolan said the Government was retaining complete control over the concept of accountability - even though the accountability of ministers to Parliament was geared to the Government majority.

"It is like the Lilliputians trying to tie down Gulliver," Lord Nolan stated. "We would be better off acknowledging that ministerial accountability is interpreted in the light of prevailing political circumstances and avoid disappointing ourselves with its application."

But in a direct and pointed attack on the "very centralist" nature of the Government position, Lord Nolan said: "If accountability is only through ministers, in respect of an agency with hundreds of offices and thousands of clients, the chain is too long."

He continued: "The person who should be answerable - perhaps at local level - remains shielded from public view, and true accountability is weakened."

Lord Nolan said that the weakening of accountability was being aggravated by the removal of powers from local authorities and the devolution of Whitehall work into quangos, in addition to the creation of official Next Steps agencies.

Hospitals can be bad for your health

Christian Wolmar
Westminster Correspondent

Visiting or working in hospital can land you in hospital, according to a report by the National Audit Office which shows that an estimated million accidents occur every year in NHS acute hospitals.

The NAO decided to investigate the question of accidents in hospitals after several trusts reported widespread concern at the high rate of injury which occurred within hospitals. The NAO found that there were no set procedures to assess the scale of the problem or to tackle it. A survey of 30 hospital trusts suggested that there were around 450,000 reported acci-

dents in acute hospitals each year, but fewer than half are recorded. The mishaps cost the NHS at least £154m - some £12m last year in immediate costs, such as treatment, plus at least £142m in longer term items such as sick leave.

Three quarters of the accidents in hospitals involved patients or visitors, who tend to suffer from slips, trips and falls, while for staff the main type of accidents are needlestick and back injuries caused during manual handling and physical assaults.

The NAO says that many accidents are preventable. *Health and Safety in NHS Acute Hospital Trusts in England*, NAO, £8.95

Putting a spin on the Millennium



An artist's impression of the £10m Millennium Wheel, to which the Government gave the go-ahead last night. At 500ft the ferris wheel will dominate the South Bank of the River Thames, in the shadow of Big Ben, for five years

PRIME MINISTER'S QUESTIONS

THE SCORE

Tony Blair 7/10
His Commons debate on preparations for a single currency.

John Major 7/10
His responses to Blair were unconvincing, but much of the rest was sparkling.

BLAIR'S ATTACK

Blair asked whether Major did not think there should be a Commons debate on European reports on a single currency before December, when the issue could be decided by ministers. Major replied that decisions would only be made at next month's Dublin summit, and there would be a debate in the House before then.

THEMES OF THE DAY

• The reported IRA visit to the Houses of Parliament (Elizabeth Peacock, C. Bailey and Spence)
• Audit Commission report on youth crime (Paddy Ashdown)
• Labour Spending plans (Dame Angela Rumbold, C. Mckenzie and Morden)
• House of Lords reform (Tony Banks, Lab. Newham NW)
• Windfall Tax (David Lillingston, C. Aylesbury)

GOOD DAY

David Heathcoat-Amory

twisted the knife, contradicting Mr Major on whether the proposals for a single currency had been properly scrutinised.

BAD DAY

John McAllister

(Lab. Dundee E) asked Major about donations to the Conservative Party opening the door for Major to come back with a polished set of condemnations of Labour's so-called 'secret funds'.

QUIP OF THE DAY

Blair: "Asking why Major would not support Lords reform? 'Could it be that the boy from Brixton has got the feeling to make himself into a nob after all? Does he really want to be remembered as the nob from Brixton?'"

UNANSWERED QUESTION

Peter Hain (Lab. Neath): "How much will the Prime Minister's proposals to abolish capital gains tax and inheritance tax cost the average taxpayer?"

CREEP OF THE DAY

Dame Jill Knight (C. Birmingham Edgbaston): On Labour's "abandonment" of spending pledges. "Didn't today's press indicate Labour's answer to the question 'when is a pledge not a pledge?' is 'when is a commitment?' will my Rt Hon Friend give this House the pledge that he will continue to speak clearly and without... the rest was drowned by jeering."

Compiled by Ben Summers

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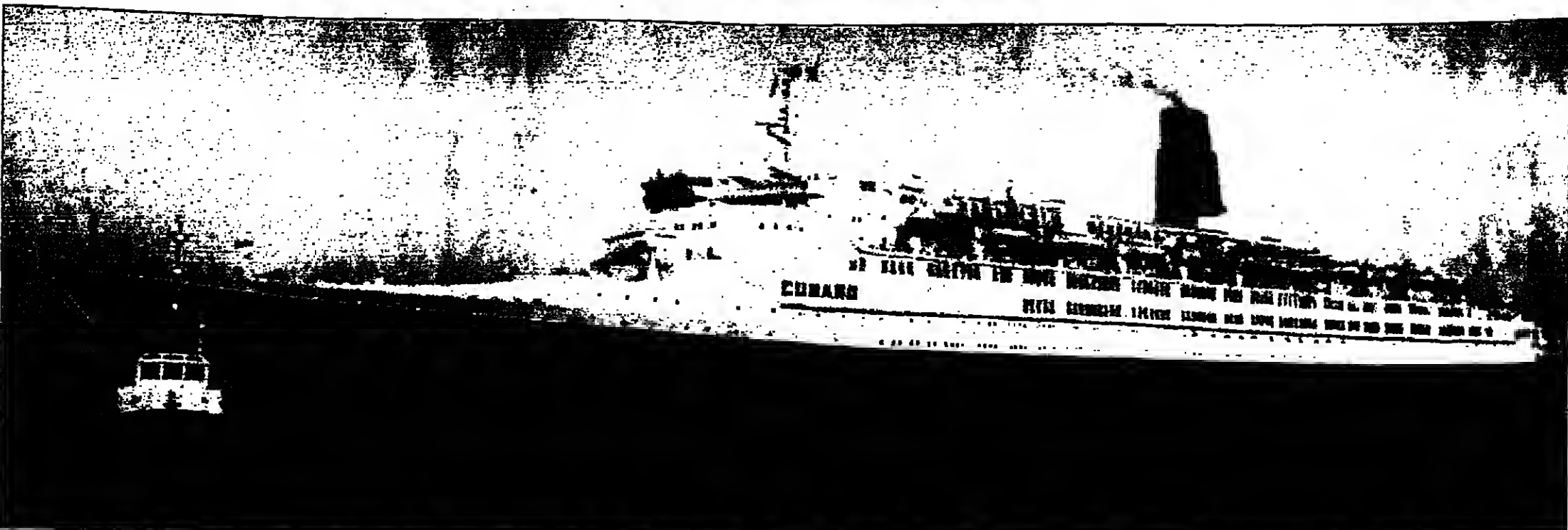
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Troubled water: The QE2 is due to arrive at Southampton today for its first refit since the 'voyage from hell' two years ago. Cunard is hoping a 1,000-strong workforce can finish on time. Photograph: PA

QE2 refit to sink old memories

The last time the QE2 set sail after a refit, the swimming pool was full of rubbish and the theatre was stacked high with mattresses, writes Charlie Bain.

Today the Cunard liner is due to dock at Southampton for a £12m refurbishment – the first since the "voyage from hell" two years ago.

That time contractors missed their deadline and work continued en route to New York resulting in massive compensation claims. But now the ship-repair firm A&P Applique says it can complete the work by 12 December and will have 1,000 pairs of hands working round the clock to finish the job before a three-night cruise.

Report blames teachers for bad behaviour

Fran Abrams
Education Correspondent

Poor discipline and boring, badly-managed lessons are often responsible for school exclusions, according to a report published by schools' inspectors yesterday.

The finding, produced as ministers announced that more than 11,000 pupils were being permanently excluded each year, has provoked fury among teachers' unions. They have

complained of a rising tide of violence by pupils and parents and have called for more exclusions in a number of high-profile cases.

Ofsted, the national inspection body, says that inspectors quickly learn to exploit inconsistent discipline, poor teaching and a chaotic atmosphere.

Inspectors who visited almost 40 schools in 16 local authorities found that there was an unacceptable variation in schools' practice over ex-

clusion. While some were far too ready to exclude pupils, others were so reluctant to do so that both staff and pupils suffered, their report said.

David Moore, the inspector in charge of the survey, said that in one case boys were excluded for three or four days for failing to wear a tie.

In another, children who started the day sitting attentively "like Sherpa Tensing, with their knapsacks and overcoats on," became increasingly

difficult after a form period in which their teacher had failed to impose order, had thrown work given as a punishment into the bin and had released them early to create a disturbance in the corridor.

Some schools failed to impose their own rules consistently, he said, and children took advantage of the resulting confusion.

In others, staff sent pupils to their heads of year for minor offences, leaving them with little time

to deal with more serious cases.

Mr Moore added that pupils with absent fathers, even those who were often away on business, were more likely to break school rules and to get into trouble.

Successful schools, according to the report, had effective and consistent systems of sanctions and rewards, monitored exclusions rigorously, provided a strong pastoral system and tailored their lessons to fit their pupils' interests and abilities.

Chris Woodhead, the chief inspector of schools, said that most schools were orderly and calm places.

"I do not accept that pupils across the country are out of control and that schools are blackboard jungles. Effective schools don't rush immediately to exclusion unless something totally unacceptable happens," he said.

Teachers unions including the NASUWT, which demanded the ex-

clusion of up to 60 pupils at The Ridings School in Halifax, reacted angrily yesterday. Nigel de Gruy, general secretary of the NASUWT, said the report carried a "dangerous" message, that boring lessons gave pupils the right to misbehave.

"It is unrealistic to expect everyone to be on top form every day. The fact that they might fail to achieve this is no excuse for disruptive behaviour and certainly no excuse for violence," he said.

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Ability:	Mixed	Mixed
Class size:	7 girls, 9 boys	11 girls, 11 boys
Aim:	Establishing starch levels in plants	Introducing sound and light
Teaching:	Clear explanation of definition of underlying principles and of the task, aided by blackboard diagrams. Questions used well to check understanding. Clear rules on behaviour and use of lab. Time set aside at end to recap.	Start of lesson spent on administration. Teacher has difficulty being heard. No attempt to organise who sits where. Explanation is rushed and unclear. Teacher's language sometimes not appropriate, worksheet unintelligible to some pupils.
Response:	Quiet, methodical and responsible work. Progress and attainment at the level expected.	Desultory conversation, unrelated to the task. Pupils wander about, are dependent on the teacher for guidance and support. Some larking about by boys. No progress, much noise, no learning.

No evidence Pill posed higher risk

Liz Hunt
Health Editor

The "third generation" contraceptive pills at the centre of a major scare last year, pose no higher risk to public health than other brands of oral contraceptives, according to the European Commission.

The statement by Martin Bangemann, the European Commissioner with responsibility for licensing medicines, raises new questions about the controversial Government advice to 1.5 million British women in October 1995 to change from these Pills to older, cheaper, brands.

The ensuing panic led to thousands of unplanned pregnancies, and has been blamed for almost 3,000 extra abortions in England and Wales in the first quarter of 1996, a rise of 6.7 per cent on 1995. This is the highest figure since 1991, according to the Office of National Statistics which released the figures yesterday.

Smith, Labour's spokesman on health, yesterday accused the Government of "bungling" the Pill safety issue. In addition, maternity units around the country have reported higher than expected birth rates of up to 25 per cent.

The Government acted after the Committee on Safety of Medicines had assessed the findings of three unpublished studies which linked third generation Pills, containing the synthetic hormones desogestrel and gestodene, with an increased risk of blood clots.

Analysis of the same data by the European drug safety advisory committee subsequently concluded that no action was necessary other than informing women of the possible increased risk. Only Germany and Norway followed the UK

lead in advising women against the Pills.

Further analysis and submissions by the Pill manufacturers to the Committee for Proprietary Medicinal Products, which advises EU members, found no reason to issue new advice or change the product licence for the drugs.

In a written reply to a question by Graham Watson, a Liberal Democrat MEP, Mr Bangemann said: "Following that consideration it was concluded that from a public health point of view, there was no evidence that the major benefits of risks are different for desogestrel or gestodene containing oral contraceptives."

The Department of Health has consistently refused to admit that it misadvised the Pill alert, although Sir Kenneth Calman, the Chief Medical Officer, conceded in his annual report for 1995 that "the absolute risk [of a blood clot] is very small in all types of oral contraceptives, and much smaller than the risk of pregnancy."

Health ministers are still pursuing a change to the licence for third generation Pills, to position them as "second line" contraceptives. The manufacturers are fighting this and their appeal will be heard by the CSM on 28 November.

Market share for the seven brands affected has fallen from 40 to 10 per cent.

Dr Andrew Watt, a drug safety expert and former Department of Health employee, yesterday said that "it remains my view that one and a half million British women were caused unnecessary anxiety by sub-standard and sloppy consideration of incomplete data".

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Les Anglais show bottle in Beaujolais

The morning after the night before, Nouveau country met its English rivals. It was pleasantly surprised, writes Michael Streeter

Nursing a hangover, the small French town of Beaujeu, near Lyons, woke yesterday to find that the English had "arrived".

The scale of this invasion of the heart of Beaujolais territory was modest, but the contents of the raid could have wider implications on Anglo-French cultural relations - a handful of cases of English "nouveau" wine.

On the day that France and the rest of the world celebrated the uncorking of the season's Beaujolais Nouveau, the new foodie magazine *EatSoup* decided to return the compliment. In an overnight operation it drove over four cases of English-matured wine to test on one of France's proudest wine-producing regions.

There was an air of tension as the people of Beaujeu, still suffering from drinking and dancing until 6.30am, loosened their palates to taste this foreign drink. But when it came the verdict was universal - the upstart English wines were "agréables".

The town's mayor, Paul Plazanet, was almost ecstatic about the taste and bouquet of the 1996 Three Choirs white English table wine, bottled in Neweast, Gloucestershire, only 10 days ago. "It has a distinctive character and I was surprised at the quality - I haven't come across a good English wine before," he said. "It has a pleasant nose."

In the town's Café de la Tour 72-year-old André Bonnen, a veteran of many years' work in the vineyards, was persuaded to part from his early morning pastis to sample the wine.

He paused before commenting: "I like it, and I think it would go well with oysters. I didn't know there was any wine from England."

When 12 workmen sat down in the café and were served the same wine, the reaction was similarly favourable. "A bit like a Macon Chardonnay," one said. In fact, whether through politeness, the effects of a civic hangover or the quality of the product, it was impossible to find anyone who had a bad word for the wines.



A new channel opens: The English proudly present their offering to an inhabitant of Beaujeu

Photographs: Tom Pileston

French have a nose for the real thing

Mary Dejevsky
Paris

A dozen or so people were huddled outside the Labour Ministry soon after midday yesterday, poring over a street map and newspaper to consider where they should lunch to sample this year's Beaujolais Nouveau.

The cognoscenti, however, had no need to consult either a map or a newspaper. The small neighbourhood bistros with special Beaujolais menus - pinned up invariably only that morning - were already full, and the enthusiasts had stayed up until midnight on Wednesday to see the barrels rolled out and the first bottles uncorked.

The third Thursday in November, the day the year's first Beaujolais is released for sale, has lost some of its early marketing sheen and settled into being a regular French feast-day - one among many, but still an unimpeachable excuse for a convivial get-together.

More was riding on the 55 million bottles of Beaujolais Nouveau released this year, half of which go for export, than France's wine-snob - yes, they have them too - cared to admit.

Last year's Beaujolais Nouveau sales were the first to feel the effects of the boycott called in many countries to protest against France's resumption of nuclear testing. Sales of Beaujolais Nouveau, it is now admitted, fell by 17 per cent and set the trend for what was to be a very poor year for French wine exports generally.

Beaujolais was also deemed to have a quality problem. But some French wine writers are now describing the 1996 Beaujolais as the best for several years.

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DAILY POEM

A Song for St Cecilia's Day

By John Dryden

From harmony, from heavenly harmony
This universal frame began;
When Nature underneath a heap
Of jarring atoms lay,
And could not heave her head,
The tuneful voice was heard from high,
Arise, ye more than dead,
Then cold and hot and moist and dry,
In order to their stations leap,
And Music's power obey.
From harmony, from heavenly harmony
This universal frame began;
From harmony to harmony
Through all the compass of the notes it ran,
The diapason closing full in man.

What passion cannot Music raise and quell?
When Jubal struck the chording shell,
His listening brethren stood around,
And, wondering, on their faces fell
To worship that celestial sound:
Less than a god they thought there could not dwell
Within the hollow of that shell,
That spoke so sweetly, and so well.
What passion cannot Music raise and quell?

The feast of St Cecilia, patron saint of music and musicians, falls upon this day. The first musical festival in her honour was held at Evreux in Normandy in 1570. Celebrations in this country were not formalised until 1683, when they took the form of a church service followed by musical entertainment. Pope, Congreve, Dryden and Purcell wrote odes in her name which were set to music. Benjamin Britten revived the practice when he made a setting of Auden's *Hymn to St Cecilia*. The St Cecilia International Festival of Music concludes this evening with a concert by the violinist Kerstin Linder-Dewan at the Stationers' Hall, London EC4, at 7pm.

news

Blown fuse on crumbling Tube halts London

Christian Wolmar

The total failure of the London Tube system on Wednesday night, the second such collapse this year, was an unlucky technical failure rather than a result of under-investment, London Regional Transport managers said yesterday.

But the incident was immediately pounced upon by passenger groups and transport campaigners as an example of the poor state of London's underground railway system.

The problem was traced to the 91-year-old Lots Road power station in Fulham, which provides nearly all the electricity for the system of 11 lines and 248 stations. An estimated 20,000 people were trapped for up to two hours after the failure of a control valve on one of the main gas boilers at the power station.

London Transport said that eventually all the trapped trains were brought to stations where people were able to get off onto platforms.

This is the third major electrical failure in the past three years. In April a power cut, which officials then called the "worst ever", hit the Underground, causing chaos for East-

er tourists and sports fans after a fire in a cable near Earls Court station.

And on 23 November 1995, the Central Line stopped running and it took a week to find the fault which was traced to a cable in the roof of Lots Road.

While London Transport says that these immediate problems are not related to the years of under-investment, which are

ers and passenger groups. Last month, a leaked report from London Transport revealed that services would have to be cut and speed restrictions implemented because of the poor state of many parts of the system. The report warned of widespread problems with water penetration which could cause electrical failures such as the one on Wednesday night.

It also suggested that one station, Ladbroke Grove, was in danger of collapsing on its own foundations, and that falling masonry could hit passengers.

Capital, the pro-public transport group, said that part of the problem is low morale at the Lots Road power station. The plant is likely to be closed down after the supply of power to the London Underground is privatised. Four consortia are competing to supply electricity to the system in a 30-year contract being offered under the Government's Private Finance Initiative. The contract will involve the operation, maintenance, financing and renewal of the Tube's high-voltage power supply.

London Transport said that it expected to be able to award the contract to the winning consortia next spring.



Going underground: LRT says Tube jam was 'unlucky'

apparent to all the 2.7million daily users of the system, it is very concerned that its spending plans will be an easy target in next week's Budget. With road-building already being cut, and the subsidies paid to private rail companies protected by government commitments, the £400m given to London Transport last year is set to be drastically reduced, despite warnings by business lead-

Cliffhanger as council plans to tear down house – and charge for the trouble



Sinking feeling: David Earle examines the crumbling ledge on which his £250,000 farm is perched. He believes that East Riding council, which will knock the building down next week, is partly responsible for the erosion which has damaged it. Photograph: Peter Byrne/Guzelian

Demolition bill sends couple over the edge

Ian Burrell

Sue Earle and her uncle David, have spent this week clearing the furniture from their cliff-top home.

Within a month, the land on which it stands will have toppled into the North Sea but East Riding council has promised them it will not let it happen.

Before the house goes over the cliff, a team of council workers will move in next week. They will then smash the house down themselves and send the Earles a bill for £3,500.

It is an ignominy for the couple who blame the local authority for causing the cliff erosion which has destroyed their £250,000 farm.

When Mr Earle, who is 65, moved in 39 years ago, soil erosion was minimal and the North Sea was 150 yards away, its green-blue waters lapping onto a sandy shore.

Now the sea comes within five feet of the farmhouse. The waves are stained murky brown by clay and are tearing the cliffs down at the rate of more than 60 feet a year.

In the spring, the Earles will take the council to a land tribunal, suing them for compensation for loss of their home.

The Earles claim that the erosion of the cliffs was transformed by a decision to set up a sea defence wall to protect the village of Mappleton, a mile down the east Yorkshire coast.

The effect, according to the Earles, was to stop the drift of sand to the cliffs beneath their home, leaving the clay exposed to the ravages of the sea.

A plucking shed has already disappeared over the 60ft cliff, along with a straw barn, a garage and a tool shed.

Sue, 43, who has lived with her uncle for eight years, said: "The council will not let us protect ourselves and yet they won't give us any protection. It has been heart-breaking."

The Earles wish to move into a former school-house which is on the farm, but a mile inland. The building is double-glazed and decorated but the council has told the couple they cannot stay there because it does not comply with building regulations.

Meanwhile, the Earles are living in a caravan.

Next week, three of their neighbours, whose homes are also being knocked down are taking the council to court to recover the costs of demolition.

East Riding council defends its action on the grounds that it is acting in the interests of safety and that the 1984 Building Act allows it to recover its costs.

Steve Frost, the council's principal building control officer, said: "You would have a ruinous house sat perched on the cliff which would become an attraction to children and others and it's predominantly their safety we are thinking of by removing the danger."

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news

Seeds of community partnership with business leaders are sown, but the biggest player stays away

High hopes for a community downed by Canary Wharf

Stephen Goodwin

Garlands were hung on the executives of some of the country's biggest development companies on Wednesday night as the ordinary people of East London tried to strike a new contract with the "power players" in their midst.

Stephen Jordan, managing director of London Continental Railways, looked slightly awkward with bright tinsel and a large coloured heart over his suit. But for the 1,200 people from diverse communities packing York Hall, Bethnal Green, the gesture was highly symbolic.

In the Indian sub-continent, garlands are given as a mark of respect to honoured guests. From the stage, Mr Jordan and executives from other companies transforming east London committed themselves to respect and to work with their poorer neighbours.

Rich and poor, congregations from a melting pot of faiths, and tenants' groups had come together for the launch of The East London Communities Organisation (TELCO) — the sixth broad-based body formed

in an attempt to restore a sense of hope through civic power in poor areas.

Cardinal Basil Hume, head of the Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales, emphasised the need to act together. "We live at a time of social fragmentation and division, where more and more people live alone, family stability is threatened, and employment is insecure."

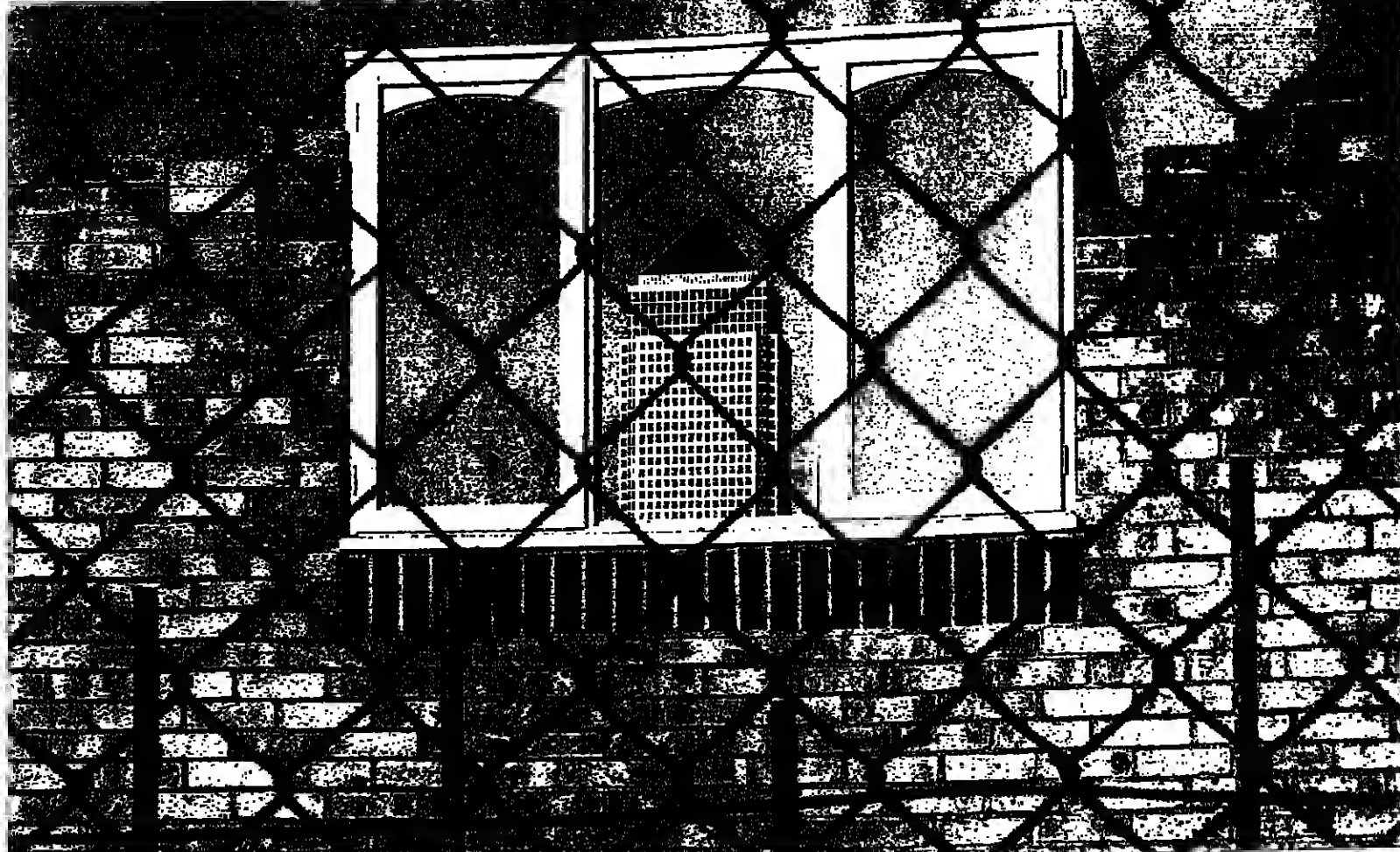
'People need to feel they are not asking for charity'

Covering the boroughs of Tower Hamlets, Hackney, Newham and Waltham Forest, Telco is deliberately based on the areas — churches and tenant groups — and the free churches were side-by-side in York Hall with delegations from mosques, saffron-turbaned Sikhs, Hindus and Buddhists. Two schools were

also represented. In an almost evangelical atmosphere, the 33 founding groups pledged commitment to Telco and promised to "pay their dues". Subscriptions, which help fund two organisations, range from £200 for small tenant groups to £1,800 for large congregations.

The dues are hefty for a poor area, but financial independence is a tenet of citizen power. "East London is heavily 'welfarised', but people need to feel they are not asking for charity when trying to build a relationship with the power players," one organiser said.

As a first step, the executives were asked to commit themselves to recruitment policies favouring the boroughs. In general terms, they did. LCR, builders of the £3bn Channel Tunnel rail link, is developing a 300-acre site in the middle of Stratford for a station. There were garlands too for the Spitfields Development Group, building offices, shops and homes, and the Health Management Group, responsible for the new London Hospital. The notable absentee was Canary Wharf Ltd. The office



Framed: A home being built on the Isle of Dogs, and Canary Wharf, whose representatives missed yesterday's launch. Photograph: Edward Sykes

blocks the company is developing in Docklands will eventually provide 55,000 jobs. Under a condition laid down in the more socially conscious 1970s, some 2,000 posts must be held from people from the bor-

oughs. There is even a penalty of £7,000 for each missing local employee. But after a meeting on Monday between six Telco representatives and Gerald Rothmann, managing operator of Canary Wharf, the com-

pany decided to send no one. A message of "goodwill" was read out, but the significance of the launch was that commitments were made in person. A spokesman for Canary Wharf said nobody was able to attend

at such short notice. But Telco leaders, who sent an invitation on 1 October, believe the absence was deliberate. Father John Armitage, of St Margaret's, Canning Town, said it was "a shame" the company

was not present. "Part of the process is for people in power to meet and be seen by ordinary people like ourselves." A garland was hung on the chair Mr Rothmann could have occupied.

Judge rules sex-change man has no marital rights

Patricia Wynn Davies
Legal Affairs Editor

A transsexual who had sex using an artificial penis during his 17-year marriage to an heiress has no right to a share of the marital wealth, the Court of Appeal ruled yesterday in a bizarre legal drama that will now move on to the European Court of Human Rights.

The man, who had been born a girl but began using a male name at 14, had appealed against a High Court ruling in January that he should be declared, on grounds of "public policy" from claiming maintenance, a share of the £400,000 matrimonial home or a lump sum after the marriage was declared a nullity in December 1994.

To widespread surprise, Mr Justice Halls had declared in the earlier hearing that the wife never knew her husband's true gender until a copy of his birth certificate was produced in May 1984. The judge ruled he had committed perjury when he married her, and that any claim he might have should be limited to that of an unmarried cohabitee. The wife told the court

'The civil rights of transsexuals have still got to be recognised at law'

he used to come out of the shower backwards. Neither of the former partners can be identified because of a court order protecting two children of the marriage who were born after the woman, now 39, underwent artificial insemination with a donor's sperm. She told the hospital her husband had had a vasectomy.

In yesterday's Court of Appeal judgment, Lord Justice Ward said: "Many — and I am one of them — will find it quite astonishing that there was no single occasion in 17 years of life together when her eyes did not see, or her hands or her body feel, or her senses tell her that she was living with a man who had the genital formation of a woman, a man who did not simply have a small or deformed penis, but had no penis at all."

But that did not alter the fact that the man had deceived the woman, heiress of a wealthy so-

ciety family, into marrying him. In his 83-page judgment, Lord Justice Ward said the claim should be ruled out on the grounds of public policy. But while the other two judges, Lord Justice Neill and Lord Justice Potter, took a less restrictive attitude by deciding the case under the discretion given by matrimonial law, they both ruled against the transsexual. Leave to appeal to the House of Lords was refused.

The man, now 50, from a modest north of England background, was barred from contact with the two children last year because of the acrimony and hostility between the couple. He said yesterday: "I believe I am entitled to a settlement and am not prepared to let it rest."

For a UK marriage to be legal it must be between a man and woman — their sexes tallying with their birth certificates. Transsexuals have so far failed to secure the right to have their birth certificates changed to reflect their new sex.

The husband's solicitor, Madeleine Rees, said: "The civil rights of transsexuals have still got to be recognised at law. We'll seek leave to go to the Lords and if they refuse we will go straight to Strasbourg."

In one of the saddest cases of its kind, the man began wearing the artificial penis, made out of plaster of paris, from his late teens. After suffering severe depression he underwent a double mastectomy in December 1973 but the operation was so unpleasant that he never underwent phalloplasty — construction of a penis, a decision he was to regret. His body was scarred from the removal of his breasts, he retained the large nipples of a woman and the genitals of a woman. At 30 he moved south and met his future wife, a 19-year-old theology student, at the pub where they both worked. The court found that she had no sexual experience before the couple began an intimate relationship using the false penis.

In a bid to overturn Mr Justice Halls' ruling that the wife had "thought that the defendant either had a very small penis or that it was deformed in some way," the man described a row after the marriage began to break down in 1994, telling the court that he undid his trousers and exposed his artificial penis, asking whether that was not good enough for her, to which she had replied: "It's not real."

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'Missing' Rwandan refugees fall prey to whim of big-power rivalry

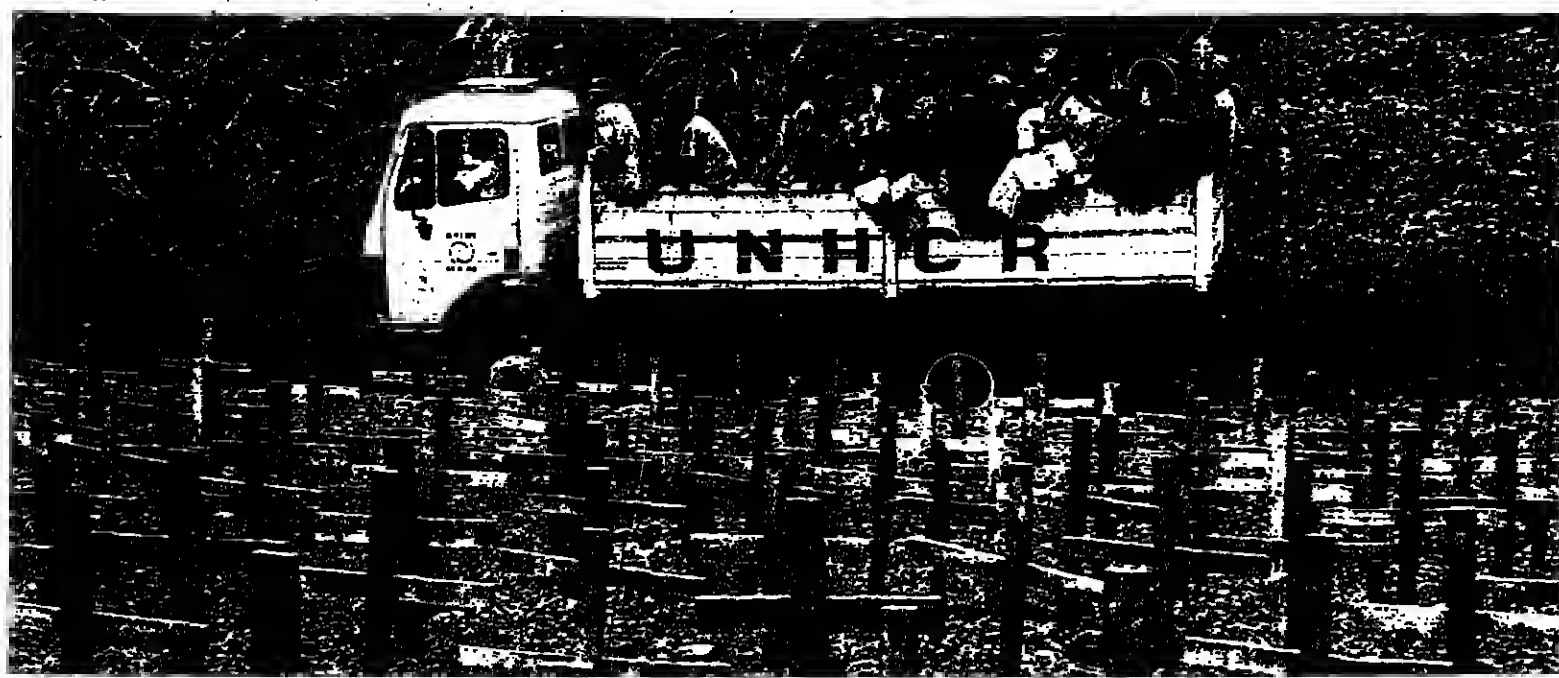
Realpolitik, not racism, is at root of row over military intervention, writes John Lichfield

The fate, condition – even the existence – of up to 700,000 "missing" Rwandan refugees has become a political football on three continents.

A proposed international force for central Africa, agreed in principle last week, has become mired in disagreements and suspicion on the scope and purposes of the mission. Officers from 20 nations meet in Stuttgart today to "review military options". The meeting has twice been delayed: no decisions are expected. Despite the pleas of aid agencies, it remains unclear, seven days on, how large a force can be assembled and when, if ever, it will be sent.

The voluntary, hmweward flood of 500,000 Rwandan refugees in the past five days has thrown planning of the mission into confusion. The main purpose of intervention was in escort aid to the refugees, who fled the 1994 Rwandan civil war, and encourage them to go home. Most of the remaining facts – how many Rwandan refugees are in Zaire? where are they? how hungry are they? who, if anybody, is controlling them? – are disputed or unknown.

The US, Britain and a num-



Refugees on their way home pass the graves of peasants massacred two years ago by Hutu extremists

Photograph: Corinne Dufka/Reuters

ber of Africa countries are increasingly doubtful about military intervention, suspecting that, as the refugee crisis ebbs, the force may be drawn into a struggle for control of Zaire.

Washington and London say they will not commit forces until the situation is clearer. The US is unlikely to send combat troops in any circumstances.

France, Belgium and Spain, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and all humanitarian

agencies on the ground say military action is still needed to find and protect 700,000 "missing" Rwandans. The return of thousands of Hutu refugees from camps around Goma should not blind the world to the possible plight of thousands of others caught up in the Zairean civil war. Rwanda insists the missing Hutus are a myth. Canada, which agreed to lead the intervention force, appears to be in two minds.

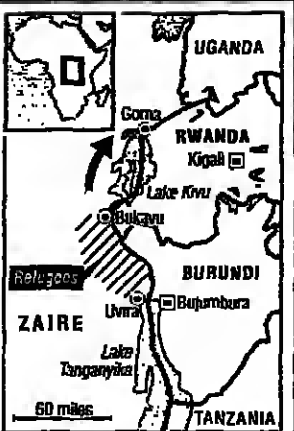
Yesterday Emma Bonino, the European Union's humanitarian aid commissioner, in effect accused the world community of racist indifference to the refugees' plight. "How many lives have to be in danger... to justify a deployment of troops?" she said in a speech in the European Parliament. "Is it the colour of their skin which makes the difference?"

Cynicism about Western arguments and motives is understandable but the core issue is not racism but realpolitik. The US, Britain and South Africa fear intervention which might have repercussions throughout central Africa. Although the force's mandate would be limited to helping refugees, they suspect French pressure for its deployment is not driven purely by humanitarian concern.

The presence of forces of this kind has a habit of freezing local conflicts. In this case, it might check the Zairean rebels who have defeated the Zairean army and remnants of the genocidal former Rwandan government army, which ruled the Hutu refugee camps. The rebels have been presented as separatists but they say their aim is to rid Zaire of the regime of President Mobutu Sese Seko. France is suspected of wishing to prop up

Satellites pinpoint the missing thousands

Geneva (agencies) – The UNHCR said it had found the 700,000 missing Rwandan Hutu refugees in eastern Zaire, using Western satellite and aerial pictures. The largest group, of 250,000 people, was located 45 miles from Bukavu. Meanwhile, refugees said Zairean rebels were detaining young men as Rwandans emerged from the hills above Goma. They also reported fighting between the rebels and Rwandan Hutu militiamen driven out of the huge Mungwa refugee camp by the rebels last week.



his regime by introducing a new, international, military element. US officials say they have no particular interest in seeing the rebels succeed; they just do not want to get involved.

However, France, in its turn, is suspicious of the close relationship between the US and the Rwandan government, dominated by English-speaking, long-exiled Hutu forces which won the 1994 civil war (who have no love of France, a supporter of the previous, Hutu, regime). Paris has no particular faith in the corrupt Mr

Mubutu but fears its influence over francophone Africa may be further diminished if Zaire – or large parts of it – fall to forces allied to a Rwandan government distrustful of France.

In coded language, each side accuses the other of ignoring, or overplaying, the humanitarian crisis for its own wider political ends. The aid agencies say geopolitics means little to the thousands – 400,000? 500,000? 700,000? – of Hutu refugees trapped around Bukavu or wandering in the vast Zairean forests to the west.

Judge orders civil trial for ex-SS officer

A military judge ordered the release from house arrest of a former SS major suspected of involvement in Italy's worst Second World War atrocity and ruled that his case should instead be considered by the civil judiciary.

The ruling on Karl Hass, 84, after a closed-door committal hearing could create a legal nightmare. Another former SS officer, ex-captain Erich Priebke, is in preventive detention pending a re-trial by a military court for the same atrocity. Reuters – Rome

Jet explodes over Alps

An unidentified plane exploded while flying over the Alps early yesterday, and authorities launched a search for the wreckage. French media reported. Residents heard the blast and saw the burning aircraft in the sky between the cities of Annecy and Thonex.

Traffic controllers in the region said they had no warning of the blast or any distress call from the plane, the radio said. About 30 police, fire-fighters and rescuers were mobilized, and a helicopter was in fly over the area in search for the wreckage, the radio said. AP – Paris

Briton escapes

A Cambodian military official said a British mine-clearance expert, Christopher Howes, believed to have been kidnapped by the Khmer Rouge in late March, had escaped.

"He escaped, I don't know when," said Major-General Tom Sambol. He added that the Armed Forces Deputy Chief of Staff, Lieutenant-General Nhek Bun Chhay, had gone to northern Cambodia to bring Mr Howes to Phnom Penh. Reuters – Phnom Penh

EU to extend Nigerian sanctions

The European Union has agreed to extend for another six months its sanctions against Nigeria, imposed as a reaction to human rights abuse in the west African country. EU diplomats said the decision would be taken without discussion by EU foreign ministers when they meet in Brussels on Monday. Reuters – Brussels

Romania faces corruption

Romanian Prime Minister-designate, Victor Ciurbea, has pledged to uphold what he says is endemic post-Communist government corruption. Mr Ciurbea, endorsed for his new job within days of reformist Emil Constantinescu's presidential election victory over Ion Iliescu, said his government would seek Western approval for tough reforms. It would also press ahead to join Nato and the EU. Reuters – Bucharest

Fire damages Parliament

Fire broke out in the Czech Parliament in central Prague early yesterday, injuring several firemen. The fire brigade said a number of rooms in the baroque building had been damaged in a newly reconstructed part of the building, but the blaze had been extinguished. The Parliament was not in session. Reuters – Prague

Hong Kong building fears

Fire regulations and the safety of older buildings were in question in Hong Kong yesterday after a blaze tore through an office and residential block, leaving at least 39 people dead. The fire, thought to have been sparked by an electrical fault in a lift, quickly engulfed the bottom four floors of the 16-storey Carley Building. Reuters – Hong Kong

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THERE'S A GREAT DEAL GOING ON THIS CHRISTMAS

Lorry drivers paralyse France

Mary Dejevsky Paris

France was facing gridlock and imminent fuel shortages yesterday as the country's lorry drivers tightened their stranglehold on road transport. Major conurbations, including Marseille, Rennes and Bordeaux were effectively blocked, and access to key motorways and trunk routes was barred.

An estimated 10,000 lorries, about 700 of them British-registered, were caught up in the general paralysis, as the lorry drivers' action entered its fourth day. Car workers at Peugeot and Renault plants were laid off because supplies of components were delayed. Bordeaux was said to be within three days of running out of fuel.

Drivers have targeted ports and cities with big fuel depots, oil refineries and trans-shipment stations. As well as using their lorries to form barricades, they are mounting "snail" convoys, driving their vehicles several abreast at slow speeds to frustrate the traffic behind.

The protesters – all haulage company employees, not the self-employed drivers who have formed the backbone of past protests – are demanding shorter working hours, retirement at 55 on full pension, and lower tax on diesel fuel. The main point of their protest, however, is a "contract" they signed with employers two years ago which, they say, has been implemented by fewer than one in three.

The contract was supposed to reduce their hours to a maximum of 240 hours a month initially, and to a maximum of 230 hours a month within two years. The second anniversary of the contract falls on Sunday, and it is due for renewal.

However, behind the protest lies a deeper fear. The contract replaced a national agreement underwritten by the government and represented a first stage in liberalising the French road haulage market. With that market due to be freed completely in 1998, the drivers fear Europe-wide competition could reduce their pay or put them out of work.

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Oprah's recommended reading becomes the talk of all America

Rupert Cornwell on the Queen of Chat who has given literature a lift

In the annals of the dissemination of human culture, it may not quite rival the discovery of papyrus, the invention of offset printing, or the launch of the Internet. But Oprah Winfrey, queen of television talk shows, has launched a book club, and the US publishing industry has never seen anything like it.

America's obsession with celebrity always amazes, but rarely as much as now. This is not, to put it mildly, a nation of voracious readers - or at least it wasn't until Ms Winfrey announced in September that, once a month, her regular weekday afternoon show would contain a half-hour "Book Club" segment "to get America reading again", complete with featured author. For Oprah-followers, it was as good as the Eleventh Commandment.

Now appearances by authors on chat shows are a routine - indeed essential - part of a book's promotion, and not only in the US. The current super-specimen here is Sarah Ferguson, dubbed by one American newspaper the "Duchess of York", who in recent days has appeared on Oprah, Larry King and seemingly every other show from Boston to Honolulu, to push her autobiography *My Story*. If a writer can get on Oprah, said one publishing company even before the advent of the Book Club, "you don't need reviews."

For pure publishing pork, though, nothing matches the featured selection on Oprah's Book Club. The first choice was a decently written but largely unremarkable novel about a kidnapped child, *The Deep End of the Ocean*, by the debutante author Jacqueline Mitchard. The publishers initially planned a print run of 100,000.

Then came 18 October and benediction by Oprah. Since then the print run has been raised to 800,000 and *The Deep End* stands today on top of the New York Times best-seller list, having vaulted over such superstars as Tom Clancy, Stephen King, John Le Carré and Dick Francis. And to prove it was no fluke, Oprah has done it again with her second selection, *Song of Solomon* by Toni Morrison.

Song of Solomon, as students of modern American writing will know, is anything but lowbrow supermarket pulp. It is an exquis-



Sales pitch: Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon*, published in 1977, was featured on Oprah Winfrey's Book Club spot. Sales have since gone through the roof. Photograph: Rex Features

ite, mystical tale of a black man's discovery of his African-American roots. Largely on the strength of it, Ms Morrison three years ago won the Nobel prize for literature. The book was first published in 1977, and before this month some 400,000 hardback and paperback copies had been printed.

That all changed with the Book Club endorsement of "the greatest living American author, male or female, black or white," as Oprah told her 9 million regular viewers. Forewarned, the paperback publisher rushed out another 580,000 copies and Knopf, which has the hardback rights, printed 40,000. In other words, the trade reckons to sell half as many books again in a couple of months as in nearly 20 years - thanks to the puffing power of a mega-celebrity.

The Book Club format is a small masterpiece of celebrity journalism: a potted biography of the subject, followed by filmed excerpts of a candle-lit dinner at Oprah's apartment with the author and four selected viewers as guests, rounded off by an on-

set interview. She does not play the artsy critic, but the gushing advocate of reading for the sake of it. So has Oprah found the magic formula to transform a nation of couch potatoes into a mighty army of bookworms? Perhaps, although proof conclusive will not come until a Winfrey-blessed Oresteian Trilogy by Aeschylus - around for 2,500 years - surges to No 1 on the Times list. What she has already demonstrated however, for the umpteenth time, is the colossal power of celebrity TV in a land where talk-show prattlers are more famous than the Presidents they interview.

In the meantime, the book world trembles in anticipation at the third monthly selection, to be shown in early January. It is *The Book of Ruth* by Jane Hamilton, a prize-winning 1988 novel that has sold 8,000 in hardback. Now the paperback publishers are rushing out 50,000 copies, and the paperback publishers half a million.

If the good Duchess could get on the Book Club, she might even be able to pay her debts.

Baby death teenager gives up to FBI

David Usborne

New York - An eighteen-year-old man accused of helping his girlfriend to kill her newborn child turned himself into the FBI in Wilmington, Delaware, yesterday amid a scrum of journalists and jostling onlookers, some of them screaming "baby killer".

After 48 hours on the run, Brian Peterson, arrived at the FBI offices with his mother and father. He was expected to plead not guilty in a charge of first-degree murder.

Both Mr Peterson, and his girlfriend, Amy Grossberg, who is being held in custody, could face the death penalty if convicted.

The case of the young pair, who were high school sweethearts in a wealthy New Jersey suburb, has drawn widespread public interest, partly because the two accused come from backgrounds not normally associated with death penalty crimes.

It has also triggered renewed debate about capital punishment in America, with many speaking up for two people, who, although they are legally old enough to be treated as adults under the law, are accused of a crime that was quite likely to have been committed in circumstances of intense confusion and distress.

The family lawyer, Joseph Hurley, conceded that his parents had been considering smothering their son out of the country in order to avoid placing him at the risk of execution.

Mr Hurley, first tried to talk them out of that course of action: the mother apparently responded that that way, "at least he has a life".

According to the police, Mr Peterson drove during the night of 12 November to Ms Grossberg's dormitory room at the University of Delaware, in Newark, and took her to a nearby motel.

Once they were in their room, the prosecution allege that Ms Grossberg gave birth to the baby - a boy - which the pair then killed and put in a rubbish bag. This was then put in a tip behind the motel.

A post-mortem revealed that the baby had suffered severe wounds to his skull, leading investigators to believe that his head had been crushed by the couple.

It appeared that Miss Grossberg had concealed her pregnancy from both her friends and family until the very end, presumably out of fear of revealing it to her parents. DNA tests are planned to establish whether Mr Peterson was the child's father.



Apartheid's former strongman lambasts S African witchhunt against Afrikaners

Cape Town (Reuters) - The former South African president P.W. Botha declared yesterday that he would never apologise for apartheid, and denounced what he called an assault on the Afrikaner by the country's new black rulers.

"I am not guilty of any deed for which I should apologise or ask for amnesty. I therefore have no intention of doing this," he said.

Mr Botha, aged 80, one of the last two surviving white apartheid presidents, made his remarks in a written statement after a private meeting with Archbishop Desmond Tutu

at a secret location. No media were allowed to witness the encounter.

Tutu heads a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, intended to heal the wounds of apartheid, which has heard from police officers that Botha almost certainly knew about the torture and murder of black activists.

Mr Botha, who became prime minister in 1978 and president in 1984, said: "I am deeply concerned about the fierce and unforgiving assault which is being launched against the Afrikaner and his language at all levels of society." He had

never associated himself with "blatant murder". But "there might have been instances during the conflict of the past where individuals have exceeded the limits of their authority."

"I cannot be expected to take responsibility for the actions of any such individuals."

He said reconciliation between former enemies could be achieved only by "closing the book on the past and focusing on the challenges of the future in unity."

"In many circles the Afrikaner is being isolated to be punished for all the unfavourable

events in the history of South Africa... Concern exists that your commission is being abused in this campaign of revenge against the Afrikaner."

He said British colonialists and not Afrikaners had introduced race discrimination into South Africa. "The Afrikaner was a victim of (British) colonial rule... The recent conflicts in which we were involved were primarily against Soviet imperialism and colonialism."

He asserted it was he who had begun the process of reform which led to Nelson Mandela being released from a life prison sentence in February 1990. He

also claimed responsibility for removing some racist legislation. "As head of the government of the day - a legally effected government which was internationally recognised - I accept full political responsibility for the policies which were followed," Mr Botha said.

But he added that he and his former cabinet could not be expected to react to every allegation that came up during truth commission hearings.

"Your commission should provide me and the ex-ministers with a document comprehensively detailing all those aspects on which it requires

comment or clarification," he told Archbishop Tutu.

Mr Botha said evidence from a former police general to the commission that he had ordered the bombing of an office block in Johannesburg housing anti-apartheid activists was wrong. "These allegations are based on untested, unconfirmed and unsubstantiated hearsay," Archbishop Tutu's commission has until the end of 1997 to unravel the human rights record of the war over apartheid, to pardon human rights offenders on both sides of the struggle, and to award limited compensation to victims.



P.W. Botha: 'I'm not sorry'

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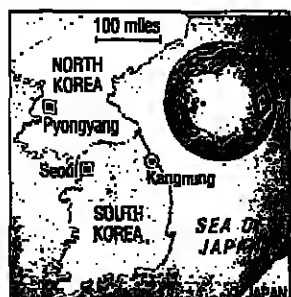
Shadow of war hangs over South Korea's border city

Richard Lloyd Parry on the turmoil caused by Pyongyang's lost submarine

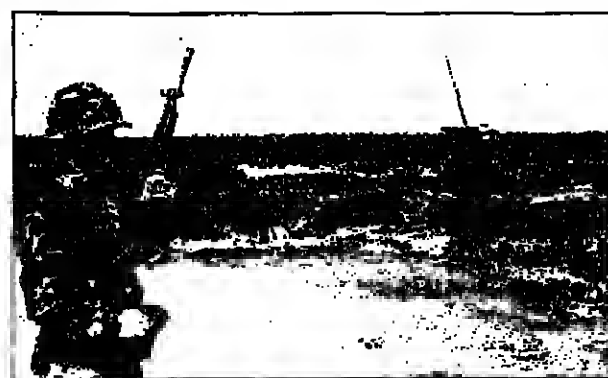
Kangnung, South Korea — Kangnung might be Korea's answer to Scarborough — an old-fashioned seaside town perched on the bleak but beautiful north-east coast. Instead of ruined abbeys, the countryside around Kangnung has famous Confucian temples, and instead of moors, the mountains of the Odaesan National Park. The locals live off farming (rice rather than cows) and fishing (squid rather than haddock). The town has one night club, but tourists are mostly old people, and the Kangnung they value is unglamorous and uneventful.

The problem with the Scarborough comparison is that 50 miles north of Kangnung is a 155-mile barbed wire fence, fortified on both sides by mines, tanks and one million heavily armed troops. Below the line, life passes quietly. Above it, in Stalinist North Korea, there is hunger, political terror and one of the world's least predictable dictators.

It is easy to forget Korea is divided, but 43 years after the armistice, the menace of war has not faded. As Kangnung recently discovered, in mid-September, a taxi driver motoring along a coastal road south of the



A South Korean soldier at the submarine's landing site. Photograph: Reuters



city made a shocking find: bobbing on the rocks near the shore was a "dolphin-like ship". Closer inspection revealed it to be a submarine. Its crew — 26 North Korean commandos and sailors — had deserted it hours before, and were armed and at large in the countryside.

The submarine's abandonment looked like a cock-up, but it caused uproar in South Korea. Armed forces were put on alert, and President Kim Young Sam denounced the "infiltration" as an act of war. Forty thousand troops, spotter planes and helicopter gunships mounted a man hunt. Two months later, all but one of the North

Koreans have been killed or captured. But the incident galvanised hardliners in Seoul and undermined the tentative progress towards peace talks with the North.

Nowhere has its impact been felt harder than in Kangnung. For more than a month, the town was under curfew, from mid-evening to early morning. During the day, traffic entering and leaving the area was stopped and searched, and fishing boats were ordered to stay in harbour. The timing could not have been worse: autumn is the peak tourist period and the season for *songji*, a rare mushroom which is a lu-

crative product of the area. When a *songji*-picker was shot after being mistaken for an infiltrator, the supply dried up. The submarine fiasco is thought to have cost Kangnung 150 bn won (£110m).

To salvage some benefit from the disaster, the town plans to turn the site of the submarine landing into a "national security historic site", with commemorative pagodas, exhibition centres and a scale model of the vessel. "Passers-by will enjoy the outstanding views, and reflect on the conscientiousness of the Korean people," says Chui Song Il of Kangnung City Hall. Kangnung locals are stoical,

but grumbles do emerge. How was the submarine allowed to make its landing on what is supposed to be one of the most heavily defended coastlines in the country? "I was a reserve soldier myself, and I stood guard on those beaches," says Bae Sun Chil, proprietor of a billiard hall, which is still suffering from the after-effects of the curfew. "Someone made a mistake, and as a taxpayer I feel betrayed." Seoul appears to acknowledge this criticism. Since the submarine's discovery, the Defence and Foreign Ministers have lost their jobs.

Beyond the military's shortcomings is the question of Korea's future. Racked by food shortages and flooding, the North is closer to collapse than at any time in its history. There are risks — a suicidal, last-ditch invasion or some kind of lesser military blackmail — but also opportunities for settling the four-decade-long stand-off. The government of the South seems more interested in confrontation than in dialogue. "We need a comprehensive overall programme," says Mr Bae. "I feel more unsafe than ever. It happened once. Why shouldn't it happen again?"



Season of mysteries and mellow fruits

William Tell would surely have known how to solve a problem baffling a farmer in the Argau canton of Switzerland.

Scientists from the Swiss Institute of Agricultural Technology are now X-raying the fruits above to try to find out whether they are apples or pears, and have told the farmer not to touch them.

Photograph: AP

Down and in: Life after politics for new US cult hero

Rupert Cornwell Washington



He may have been trounced in the Presidential election. But at the crusty old age of 73, Bob Dole is proving there is life after politics: first as a glowingly reviewed performer on the late-night talkshows — and now as the first major party White House candidate to star in a commercial advertisement.

"Not Doing Anything?" asks the caption on the Air France advertisement in the *New York Times*, *Washington Post* and other papers yesterday, touting a \$299 (£179) weekend round-trip to Paris. And who is the figure below, his arm extended in a beaming "Come Fly With Me"? None other than the erstwhile Republican candidate, who by his own admission is

ter he had lost the New York Governorship that same year. But Mr Dole is carving a special niche, and perhaps achieving a place in the national affection that he never achieved in his 35-year Congressional career.

Within days of his 5 November defeat, Mr Dole was in the talk shows displaying the throwaway humor, sometimes sleazebag, sometimes self-deprecating, that — if he had unveiled it more during the campaign — might have made the outcome much closer. What about the "300lb Clinton?", he was asked by David Letterman on CBS.

If Bob Dole had unveiled his humour earlier, the US election result might have been different

doing exceedingly little at the moment.

Of course, had things turned out otherwise, Mr Dole might have been savouring a trip to Paris next year aboard Air Force One (running costs some \$50,000 per hour). But Air France it must be. As a tiny line of print makes clear, he is donating his \$3,000 fee to Sarah's Circle, a Washington community centre for the elderly.

Though no US presidential contender has featured in a commercial campaign, dozens of lesser politicians have — among them Dan Quayle, once vice president, who pushed Wavy-Lay potato chips in 1994, and Mario Cuomo, who sung the praises of Doritos corn chips at

"I never tried to lift him. I tried to beat him," Mr Dole retorted. Yes, he confessed at another point, he was up and ready to go, "but," he added, "there's no place to go."

A few days later he was briefly guest co-host on *Saturday Night Live*, mocking his own habit of referring to himself in the third person.

"This is Bob Dole, and Bob Dole thinks..." And so on, and so on, to gales of laughter. In fact the signs are emerging of a Bob Dole cult, probably short-lived, but emblematic of a country in which media is message, and politics, showbusiness and advertising campaigns merge into a single indistinguishable entity.

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Unloved, unpaid and under-fed ... how a failed doctrine wrought havoc with Russia's dead army

Christopher Bellamy reports on soldiers begging in Moscow and officers driving taxis.

Moscow — If anyone were fool enough to attack Russia today, the only way the Russians could respond quickly would be with nuclear missiles. The rest of the Russian armed forces have reached a point of crisis and are on the edge of disintegration. It is a miracle they have not already fallen apart.

A group of young soldiers, in uniform, approach a car stopped at a set of Moscow traffic lights. They are conscripts, who are not allowed to wear civilian clothes, but they are unarmed and unthreatening. "Please, sir," one says, leaning over to the window. "Can you spare 1,000 roubles [11p]?"

Moscow sprawls, muddy and cold, a grey ocean punctuated by glittering, hermetically sealed islands of Western wealth. Much of the city is controlled by criminal gangs, who sponge off the wealth pouring in from foreign investors and from Russia's own vast natural assets, just like 1920s Chicago, but without prohibition.

Amid the foreign wealth, a lieutenant-general at the nerve centre of Russian operational planning has not been paid since August. His daughter wants to study medicine but the family cannot afford the fees, so she works in a bank, one of many Western enterprises springing up in Moscow, to try to save the money. But, at the moment, she is subsidising her father.

Last year, a fighter squadron was temporarily deployed to the Russian Far East. The officers had to make their way across Russia's vast land mass, stopping at hotels. Their expenses, and the component of their salary designed to cover food, have still not been paid.

Somehow, they manage. They always did, in an economy more attuned to real goods than to money. "Captain so-and-so isn't so badly off," they say. "Do you know, his wife works in the pilots' mess? They get all the food they need."

Fortunately, nobody is likely to attack Russia today, or tomorrow. Just as well, because with the armed forces in their current parlous state, it is difficult to believe Russia could mount a conventional defence. They would have to use the only forces they keep at a "high state of readiness" — their nuclear forces.

"We have concentrated on the main priorities," said Colonel Viktor Baranets, press secretary to General Igor Rodionov, the Defence Minister. "The strategic missile forces

remain in a high state of readiness. So do the space forces."

It is highly unlikely that Col Baranets has been paid lately. Since August, hardly anyone has, and travel expenses and subsistence allowances have not been paid for a year. General Rodionov has refused to take any pay himself until the arrears have been sorted out.

These are the people to whom the pay system gives priority — the General Staff, the elite "court" division in Moscow. Servicemen in lower priority units have been without pay for much longer.

Yet, extraordinarily, some of them carry on working, although the part-time jobs they do to pay their bills are absorbing more and more of their energies. Many officers drive taxis at night.

Col Baranets and his interpreter, however, were smartly dressed, in newly introduced uniforms. "This is the extent of military reform so far," said the colonel. "A new uniform, new forms, new rubber stamps". But even the new uniforms are in short supply. Many officers only have one uniform shirt, and only wear uniform on special occasions. Even officers' uniform shoes are in short supply.

Most of the military blames the former Defence Minister, General Pavel Grachev, who

Nuclear defence would be the only option if Russia were attacked today

was fired in advance of the presidential election in July for not grasping the need to cut the size of the Russian forces to a manageable level.

The official strength of the armed forces — army, navy, air force, missile troops and space forces — is 1.7 million, although with desertion and manpower shortfalls, the true figure is probably nearer 1.3 million. "The aim is to reduce by 200,000 in the next two years," said Col Baranets. "In the longer term, [to reduce] to a million — maybe even 500,000. There is agreement that the armed forces are too big, but," he smiled, "the country is big also." It is understood that General Rodionov and his advisers believe that the sheer size



Ill at ease: Two Russian soldiers wait at a checkpoint to withdraw from the centre of Grozny, Chechnya, earlier this year. Photograph: AP

Power cuts

Strategic nuclear warheads 8,625
Total men under arms (Russian figure) 4 million, of which:

Armed forces 1.7m (probably nearer 1.3m) of which: Strategic missile and space troops 139,000; Army 460,000; Air force (VVS) 145,000; Air defence (PVO) 175,000; Navy (VMF) 190,000.

Interior Ministry (MVD) 232,000; Frontier Forces (PV) 100,000; Forces for Protection of Russian Fed'n (FSB) 20,000; Federal Government Communications and Information Agency (FAPSII) troops 90,000 (?); Ministry for Emergency Situations troops 90,000 (?); Transport 90,000.

Total accounted for: 1,741,000
Other troops: 2,259,000

Source: Information gathered by Christopher Bellamy from the Russian Ministry of Defence

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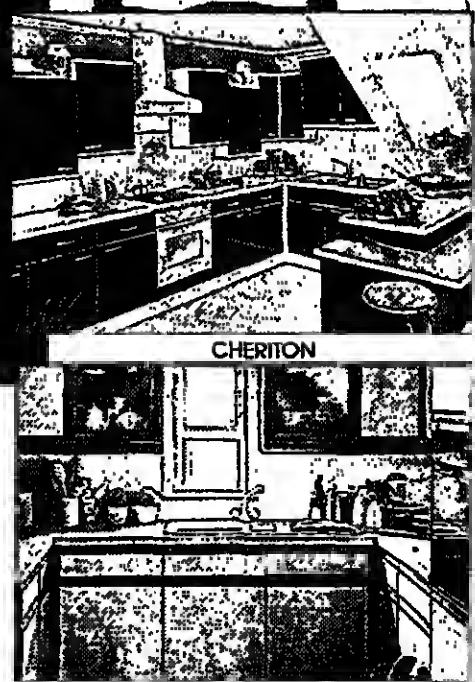
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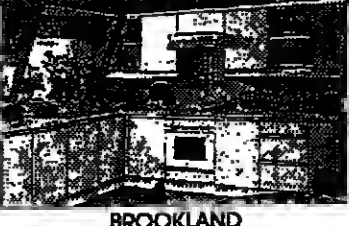
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IN THIS WEEKEND'S INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY



Lord Wyatt (right) has been described as one of the most influential behind-the-scenes figures of our age. Is he? Or is he merely good at parties?

Plus: Dennis Lim on the media rehabilitation of Courtney Love, the woman Americans love to hate; and Blake Morrison, Helen Fielding, Peter York

and in real life

Girl Power: liberation or hype? Plus, the perm is dead, long live the perm; the *Trainspotting* effect — why the eyes of world are on Edinburgh; Nicholas Barber spends the night with Tricky

FESTIVE SPIRITS SPECIAL

... recipes from Britain's top chefs using alcohol for seasonal cheer. Plus, Richard Ehrlich and his panel of tasters choose the top five bottles of bubbly on offer this year



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Paul McGrath, Barrister

The Tories tell lies because we let them

On Tuesday the Conservatives made 89 allegations about Labour's spending plans. Perhaps 10 or a dozen of them were reasonable queries about Labour policies. The remainder – nearly 80 – are Tory lies. Labour has not promised to spend the money as the Tories claimed – indeed, Tony Blair and Gordon Brown have succeeded in ensuring that none of Labour's spokespeople makes any commitments that are not accounted for.

Yesterday the Government was at it again, this time on Labour's proposal for a windfall tax on privatised utilities. The Prime Minister told us the levy would cost people £200 on their gas and electricity bills. Another lie. The windfall levy will hit shareholders, not customers.

A few exaggerations here and there are part of the game in the run-up to an election. Politicians desperate to catch and hold voters' attention will simplify their claims and caricature the opposition. Let's admit it: even the odd journalist is occasionally guilty of a little distortion in the interest of winning quick understanding. But this week's Conservative campaign is merely mendacious. Even worse, civil servants were exploited in the exercise. Conservative strategists began by falsely claiming that their costings had the endorsement of the head of the civil service, Sir Robin Butler. Second, civil servants' time and taxpayers' resources were wasted doing silly sums based on foolish assumptions about

Labour policies supplied by Conservative politicians. The party of government always has an advantage in the run-up to the election. But this time the Conservatives are abusing that position.

Conservative strategists, led by Brian Mawhinney, seem to think electioneering is a sport in which the party with the cleverest manipulation and the cheapest slogan wins most applause. Wrong. Even in a climate of popular apathy and media bias, parties should maintain a certain level of integrity. We hope voters will closely follow the actions of every political party; certainly we will holler when they overstep the mark, as the Conservatives did this week.

When the Conservatives launched an identical attack on Labour's spending plans before the last election, they had a much stronger case. Labour did indeed plan to raise pensions and child benefit to the tune of several billion. The figure attached by the Conservatives to Labour's plans may have been rather arbitrary, but the general message was plausible enough: Labour wanted to spend more money. But we are in a different world now. For four and a half years (under both John Smith and Tony Blair) iron discipline has been applied. The position is clear: new policies must be paid for within existing resources (or, in a few cases, from the windfall tax). Shadow Cabinet colleagues and party members may have winced along the way, but the prudence has paid off.

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Of course the real test of politicians' integrity is not the remarks they make about the opposition before an election, but whether they will deliver on their own promises after one. The Conservatives failed to do so in 1992 – raising taxes after promising to cut them. George Bush did the same in America after 1988. A British party that reneges on its promises this time around risks destroying any credibility its politicians still have with voters. As Blair and Brown well know, if a new Labour government were to spend and tax with abandon after pre-election promises of austerity, it would destroy all hope of re-election.

There is every reason for believing that the Labour leadership will keep just as tight a rein over loose-lipped and loose-pursed colleagues in government as it has in opposition. The more serious problem is that the political fight over tax and spending may tie a future government's hands in reacting to new and unforeseen circumstances. At the moment the public finances remain in a rather dubious state, despite the better-than-expected news on government borrowing this week. If any party gets trapped into promising never to increase the overall level of spending or taxation, or denying that such increases could ever

be necessary, then it is making a big mistake. Pretending that everything can always be met within existing budgets is simply dishonest.

The Liberal Democrats at least are prepared to admit as much. Yesterday they cheerfully set out proposals to oppose all Budget tax cuts, and to increase income tax in order to increase spending on education. To the extent that they are facing up to the need for higher investment in certain areas, their approach is welcome. But the Liberal Democrats are going further. They are openly betting that voters actually want to pay higher taxes for better public services, and are willing to vote accordingly.

Sadly, apart from a few committed altruistic voters, the Lib Dems are kidding themselves. In spite of all the polling evidence that the public wants more spent on the NHS, most people still believe that taxes, and in particular their own, are too high. Labour has been astute to recognise that and search for more imaginative ways (through the windfall tax) to raise new revenue without having to increase income tax.

In fact, the inconsistencies of public opinion must bear some of the blame for both the restrictive prudence of the Labour Party and the campaigning methods of the Conservatives. If we voters were not so neurotic about the prospect of higher taxes, then our politicians could conduct a more honest debate about the needs of our public ser-

vices, against our natural desire to spend what we earn on ourselves. Labour would not need to be so restricted in its policy proposals, and the Conservatives would not bother running misinformation campaigns against them. The behaviour of the Conservative Party in the last week has been appalling, but it cannot take all the blame. As voters, to some extent, we get the politics and the campaigning we deserve. The more we turn our backs on this kind of campaign, the sooner politicians will concentrate on what matters.

Touchy-feely dad is still a lad

Children like "new men". According to the latest evidence, they want dad to be around, to pay them attention, to cuddle and love them and touchy-feely things like that. And daddies, it seems, are starting to get the hang of it.

It's only a start, mind. Daughters still get less of dad's time and attention than sons. Mothers still provide most of the children's emotional support and comfort. Children turn to father first only over money, sport and trouble with – you guessed it – mum. And how do you think dad spends most of his time with the children? Watching telly. It looks like New Dad is just a New Lad.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Vital facts kept from foster parents

Sir: Foster care (letters, 18, 20 November) might be more successful if the foster parents were given full and honest details about a child's past home life and present behaviour patterns.

My mother, a very experienced long-term foster carer, has repeatedly not been given vital information about the children she looks after. She has been asked to look after children who, unknown to her, have been involved in the abuse of other children, whilst also caring for children who have themselves been sexually abused. Likewise, to be asked without warning to care for a violent child is inappropriate.

Children with difficult behaviour patterns need special care, supervision and tuition. Placing them in foster homes where their carer has no chance of knowing fully what they need, why they are afraid of certain situations and so on does a disservice to the children and carers alike. If social services gave an honest background about the child, rather than omitting important details for fear of failure to place the child, placements would have a chance, at least, of lasting. KAREN ILLINGWORTH, Manchester

Tunnel not the worst risk

Sir: That the fire in the Channel Tunnel was a serious event there can be no doubt, but hasn't this one incident been blown out of all proportion? Vast numbers of people and vast tonnages of freight have used the tunnel since it opened without mishap until then. By all accounts the emergency procedures worked satisfactorily: everyone was evacuated and there was no loss of life. The very same day one lorry driver was badly killed and three others seriously injured in an accident on the M6.

I and my family have used the tunnel on a number of occasions and accept the fact that all travel involves risk. However, I remain convinced that the risks involved in travelling through the Channel Tunnel are minimal when compared with the risks involved in driving from our home to the Folkestone terminal via the M25 and M20. NEIL McNEILL, Dorking, Surrey

Sir: The recent accident in the Channel Tunnel ("Darkness at the end of the tunnel", 20 November) raises questions of safety not only in the tunnel but also on cross-Channel ferries.

On a recent trip to Brittany I was travelling in a car as a passenger. We were directed to an upper deck in which the cars were packed so tight that the only possible way to leave the car was by climbing out on the driver's side, which would have been impossible for anyone less than agile. Even then there was less than 18 inches of space on the driver's side.

In the event of a fire on the car decks whilst loading, it would have been impossible for many passengers to leave their cars amid the smoke, heat and anxiety of all to leave. The loading officer I spoke to on the ferry said he realised the problem but was under instructions to get all the cars on, irrespective of their width. BOB WILLIS, Bilton, Avon



No animals, no countryside

Sir: These are stirring times in which to be a beef farmer and goodness knows we have enough trouble down on the farm without the likes of Danny Pennan ("Man and beast", 18 November) emoting.

Has he never heard of the organic method of rearing animals? Does he really think that none of us care, on dark, cold mornings and long, hot days, for the beasts in our charge?

There are abused farm animals, but I should like to see a battery hen survive for a day after having its beak sliced off. Even hens raised quite uncontentiously have to have their top beak snipped with a cauteriser; anyone who knows the opportunistic, carnivorous nature of the beady-eyed fowl appreciates that this small operation is a necessary evil.

Vegetarian animal-rights come up with no solution as to what rural life would be about without farm animals. No milk without meat, and there would be no wheat without manure – unless one wants the rivers full of nitrates. Should farmhouses be full of computer firms and holidaymakers whose children look in vain for lambs in springtime? FENILOPE REID, Wantage, Oxfordshire

Sir: Robert Carr's farm may be run on humane lines (letter, 20 November) but there are many, influenced by the financial advantage of over-intensive production of livestock, that are not.

The welfare of animals will

continue to deteriorate so long as they are designated as mere "commodities" in the Treaty of Rome. Unless steps are taken to get animals re-categorised as "sentient beings", we may be faced with the nightmare of scientists believing they can solve the problem of animal abuse by producing an apparently "senseless" strain which shows no aversion to discomfort, deprivation or pain, which would be the ultimate obscenity. JOAN HAGGARD, Harpenden, Hertfordshire

Key MPs deny 'influence'

Sir: We are surprised that you have chosen, particularly at this stage, to raise a matter which relates to our roles as Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Select Committee on the Channel Tunnel Rail Link Bill.

The article "Ministers subvert Kent blight inquiry" (14 November), refers to a "leaked letter" from Sir George Young MP to William Waldegrave MP. The letter, your correspondent suggests, indicates that Sir George intended to "influence" us to ensure that the cost of constructing the rail link was minimised.

The committee devoted several paragraphs of its special report to the House of Commons to the issue of blight. The Committee said that "the present law appears totally inadequate in situations in which a

reduction in the price of a property is attributable to a project such as the rail link, even though the property will not actually be physically affected".

As the correspondent rightly points out, the letter was the subject of exchanges between MPs on the select committee in October last year.

We were instructed by the committee to see Sir George and John Watts MP to clarify the matter. We did so, and on 24 October, 1995, reported back to the committee, reading into the committee's public record a letter Sir Anthony had received from Sir George. In it he said that "I am happy to reaffirm that the Government has not in the past, and will not in the future, bring any undue influence to bear upon the select committee or its chairmen. Our approach to you and your committee will continue to be one appropriate to the promoters of a Hybrid Bill, recognising the quasi-judicial role of the select committee and your independence as its chairmen."

The matter was not, in our recollection, raised before the committee again, which would suggest that all involved with the committee's proceedings – members of the committee, promoters and petitioners – were content. Sir ANTHONY DURANT MP (Reading West, Con) Sir IRVINE PATRICK MP (Sheffield Hallam, Con) House of Commons London SW1

Museum's entry charge dilemma

Sir: The British Museum "must not go down the path indicated by Mr Edwards", croaks Andreas Whitman Smith in his article (18 November) about my "trendy" report.

In fact, the "path" indicated in my report is not at all what Mr Whitman Smith says. What the report does say is that, given the projected deficit in the museum's budget and the prospective levels of government funding, the museum will have to choose between two broad options, both unpalatable:

(a) continuing with free admission at the cost of severe cuts in core activities, reduced opening hours and public services, an inability to maintain the building properly, minimal expenditure on acquisitions and the loss of perhaps one third of the staff, and

(b) funding what the Museum does and badly needs to do with the help of an admission charge which it would much prefer not to introduce and a smaller reduction in staff overheads.

On exhibiting the collections, my "evident disapproval" of what the museum does is more evident to Mr Whitman Smith than to me. ANDREW EDWARDS, London SW19

Sir: Sadly there are few museums now that allow free access, so the news about the British Museum comes as a depressing blow. The

Government argues that people should pay for their entertainment. Museums are not there for entertainment; they are repositories of culture, history, and knowledge in a form that is unique.

Free access to museums has always allowed the possibility of entering, at will, for the day or for just a short time; to sample the whole briefly or to concentrate on one particular item or group of items. This kind of access is particularly important for young children, who do not always have long attention spans but who, none the less, invariably find something to stimulate their interest with each successive visit.

Not is that kind of access unimportant for adults, be they tourists or academics. I have visited the British Museum for over 20 years and I have always found something "new" on each occasion. DEREK LEE, Wealdstone, Middlesex

Eager warrior

Sir: My father-in-law managed to join the army in 1914 at the age of 14, only to be discharged almost immediately when his father discovered the attempt (letters, 13, 16, 20 November). At 18, at the end of the war, he joined the Navy, serving for some years before being discharged with a medical condition "that would get worse".

Undaunted, he knocked a year off his age in 1939, and saw service in France, blowing up ammunition dumps ahead of the German army after the fall of Dunkirk.

His medical condition caught up with him in his eighties. DEKE GRIFITHS, Church Street, Shropshire

Britons who served Africa

Sir: Andrew Marshall ("Heart of prejudice", 20 November) is certainly right in one respect: those of us who went out to Africa had high hopes and a belief that we were going to do good. The remainder of his article ignores the achievements of a handful of administrators, doctors, nurses, teachers, agriculturalists and others in the 1940s and 1950s. This was an era of peace, justice, security and development, both economic and political.

We gladly pursued the British government's objective of granting independence to Africa. It was such as Uganda, where I served in the administration from 1955 to 1964. It may be that Uganda could have been better prepared for independence if we had been more positive in the 1950s in planning a timetable for a reasonable period of self-government leading to independence in the late 1960s or early 1970s. However, Mr Macmillan gave in to pressures from left-wingers and the Americans and ordered us in cut and run from East Africa in the early 1960s.

Nevertheless, older Ugandans today, as their country recovers from the regimes of Amin and Obote, remember our years with gratitude. Now, under President Museveni, there are once again high hopes for Uganda's future. ALAN FORWARD, Poynton, Dorset

Victims of the .22 handgun

Sir: All handguns should be banned except for people in uniform who carry them for the protection of the public (letter, 19 November).

The .22 handgun is not injurious to humans? What about my schoolmate who shot himself in the stomach accidentally? He did not even get to the hospital alive. The weapon involved in the tragedy was a .22 revolver. What about the two men, albeit they were looters, shot in front of me with a .22 rifle? One died instantaneously, the second died while I was writing down his particulars.

I write as one who for six years in uniform carried a pistol on my hip. That weapon was solely to destroy human life. GEORGE O'NEILL, Richmond, Surrey

Sir: I remember the authorities once deciding that motorcycles above 250cc were too dangerous for beginners, who were then restricted to the much less powerful machines below 250cc. Most new sales are to beginners. The motorcycle industry reacted by developing within this restriction machines of no lesser power than the older "large" motorcycles. How long before we face .22 pistols with the power of today's .44 magnums? PHIL PAYNE, Isham, Northamptonshire

Sir: It was worrying to read that the Sportsman's Association believes the Firearms Bill will "dislocate the lives of tens of thousands of sportsmen" (letter, 19 November). A person who will be "dislocated" by the withdrawal of their right to shoot handguns would seem to me to be in an inappropriate person to have access to a handgun in the first place. To read that there are "tens of thousands" of such people is truly terrifying. NEIL BABBAGE, Chelmsford, Essex

essay

The end of the tiger may make headlines, but the flora and fauna in our own backyard is equally in danger of extinction. Nicholas Schoon has a solution



To save the world, start here

We thought the tiger, that most potent symbol of endangered wildlife, was safe. But India's efforts to save the great cat from poaching and habitat destruction are failing. The tiger is heading for extinction in the wild.

When we think of the rapid, man-made decline in the world's wealth of plant and animal species we think of developing countries. We ought to focus more of our worries on our own backyard where wildlife is equally precious and threatened, but where there is a much better chance of success.

Our influence in India, Kenya, Brazil and the like is limited. We can condemn and cajole but treasuring the animals and surviving wildernesses of far-off lands is insufficient incentive to save them, even if millions of us were to become eco-tourists.

Meanwhile, here in Britain we have done more harm to our own depleted, abused country-

side and wildlife in the past 40 years than in the 400 before that. Our priority must be to get conservation working properly here, because we have the resources and the knowledge to do so. We ought to be setting an example, because for decades Britain has been what most of the developing world is becoming – a densely populated, intensely urbanised land where the bulk of the countryside is used for intensive food production. That is what most of the world will be like in the next millennium.

Our ancestors waged war on the wild, felling the forests which once covered most of the country and ruthlessly exterminating the predators which hunted their gamebirds and farm animals. We lost the wolf, the wild boar and the beaver. But, like a triumphant guerrilla army, wildlife came back with a combination of flexibility and opportunism, taking advantage of the way in which people changed the land. A rich variety of insects, birds and flowers

flourished in man-made habitats such as heathland, marshy hay meadows, chalk downland and coppice woodland.

Then, halfway through this century, nature went into rapid retreat as intensive farming – driven first by government and then by European Union subsidies – took off. Ancient pastures were ploughed up and doused with pesticides and fertiliser. Countryside was gobbled up by suburbs and new roads. Survey after survey showed plant and animal species in decline and some becoming extinct at the hand of man.

The rush to destruction has slowed, thanks to public pressure and a dawning comprehension that subsidising farmers to grow too much food and ruin the countryside in the process is insane. We can now help nature make a comeback.

Should we bother? Conservationists argue that the world's immense variety of plants and animals – about 13.6 million species – include as yet undis-

covered ones which could pave the way for important new drugs or crop varieties. They say natural habitats like rainforests provide "ecosystem services" – they regulate the regional climate, keep the life-giving rain falling yet prevent it causing soil erosion.

Such reasons for conserving nature may apply in the tropics, but they won't wash in Britain. We got rid of the great bulk of our forests, our most extensive natural habitat, more than 1,000 years ago without any catastrophic results for climate, agriculture or economic growth. It is unlikely that some endangered species found in these islands will one day provide a great medical or agricultural breakthrough.

You could argue that our native wild species have some intrinsic right to exist but you'd be entering a philosophical minefield. Much better to fall back on the unarguable, practical point that wildlife is popular. There is a huge and growing public appetite for conservation. One example: the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds hopes to recruit its millionth member next year.

Technology and urbanisation have forced us away from the land. We love nature in the abstract but are pretty ignorant about it. A recent survey found that a third of 1,000 primary school children thought badgers were not native to Britain. How should we protect and encourage nature? The purist, deep green view, is that we ought to somehow withdraw and let nature get on with recreating a primeval wilderness

depleted of man. This seems hopelessly inappropriate for Britain. Two per cent of the nation's area is now owned by nature conservation bodies and devoted primarily to wildlife conservation. The rest is for humans – for our buildings and roads, for growing crops and timber, raising livestock, game birds and deer for shooting.

On a small proportion of this man-made landscape, nature conservation as an important secondary consideration. But on the remainder, wild species have to fit in as best they can, along road verges, hedgerows, in suburban gardens and on derelict urban land.

There is going to be more and more heated debate about what nature conservation is for, how it should be done, how money should be allocated. An uninformed, urban public leans to the deep green view that nature should just be left alone, unharmed and undisturbed, to get along with being wild.

But the conservation professionals working for the government and wildlife charities have a more informed, quite different view. They see nature's recovery, as having to be carefully managed by man. Habitats have to be manipulated to provide the desired balance of plants and animals, otherwise you just get a mess of brambles and bracken.

One director of English Nature, the government's wildlife conservation arm, puts it thus: "It is not just a case of fencing off an area and letting nature take its course. That way, the toughest

and coarsest species would obliterate everything else."

Conservationists argue that Britain's flora and fauna is largely the result of man's traditional uses of the land and the semi-natural habitats they created. But those traditions, such as cutting reeds, grazing heathlands and coppicing woodlands, have largely died out so they need to be revived for the sake of wildlife – using labour-saving machinery to save money.

It is a sort of scientific gardening on a grand scale and it is already leading to strange conflicts. Gangs of conservation volunteers cheerfully chain-saw and burn birch trees on low-land heaths. Why? Because the invading hich is slowly turning the heath back into the forest it was thousands of years ago, before people cleared it for hunting and grazing. The conservationists want to preserve the heaths as habitat for the rare sand lizard, natterjack toad and Dartford warbler – species which would vanish if it became forest again. But they find themselves accused by outraged walkers and nearby residents demanding to know why they are felling innocent trees.

Conservationists protect endangered, nesting seabirds from foxes by picking off the predators with high-powered rifles. Grey squirrels are routinely poisoned because they are out-competing the red squirrel and chewing saplings to death. Conservationists do not boast about these awkward interventions. The conservationists' holy grail is for the entire £3bn a year of taxpayers' money now subsidising British

agriculture to be made conditional on farmers protecting or encouraging wildlife and traditional landscapes.

At the moment only £100m a year of these subsidies, just 3 per cent, is linked to looking after nature. If this sweeping reform took place the conservationists would then be heavily involved in advising farmers and in keeping check on whether all that subsidy was succeeding in making species flourish. They would also have succeeded in making their interests with those of the country's landowners in Britain. Both groups would have a big interest in the subsidies continuing indefinitely.

But as they make progress towards that goal they will face a rising backlash from townies questioning whether nature conservation is a proper use of large sums of taxpayers' money. That is one forthcoming conflict. Another split is emerging between professional conservationists and ecologists who work in cities and those who work deep in the country. The urbanites celebrate the way nature takes over derelict factory sites and abandoned railway lines with a riot of vegetation. They also welcome the fact that these plant species are often "exotics" from overseas, brought in accidentally. But rural conservationists often fear and loathe these aliens. They detest the way in which species like the sycamore, rhododendron and grey squirrel are barg-

ing their way across Britain. There is no doubt that some exotics do harm native species. Yet in a city-dwelling, globally trading Britain the urban ecologists' intolerant outlook has much to commend it.

Even if it never reaches its £3bn-a-year holy grail, the nature conservation cause is set to gain more influence and money. But there are four goals its adherents should keep in mind if they want to keep the public on their side.

First, go with the flow of nature and favour low-cost, low-intervention methods. Second, reach out to educate and enthuse young people. Third, bring nature to town. For every tract of semi-wilderness conservationists buy in Britain's uplands there should be half a dozen small reserves created or protected in urban areas which people can easily visit. And, fourth, aim to create an authentic British wilderness within the next half century. A huge native, broadleaf forest stretching for dozens of miles. Bring back a sizeable chunk of the wildwood which covered most of post-Ice Age Britain 6,000 years ago, when man recolonised these islands. It should be a forest large enough to support sustainable populations of high herbivores like deer and wild boar.

We in Britain may not be able to save the tiger in Asia, but we could and should return the wolf to these shores. An Independent World Wide Fund for Nature Book. *Going, Going, Gone* by Nicholas Schoon is published by Bookman this week, price £6.50.

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I thought I heard a muffled ringing ...

Miles Kington

I really do not have time to write a piece today, as I am sitting by my phone waiting for it to ring with an offer of the editorship of *Punch*, in the wake of the departure of Peter McKay.

I think in all modesty that I could do the job for at least as long as Peter McKay did it, perhaps even a couple of issues longer, and if I couldn't I could instead claim the record for being the most short-lived editor in *Punch* history, a record currently held by Peter McKay, who has just broken the previous record by several years.

You will notice, by the way, that I said just now that I am "sitting by my phone waiting for it to ring". I said that because it is a nice old cliché, and I used it unthinkingly. In fact, it is untrue. People do not sit by their phones any more waiting for them to ring. They put their phones in their pocket and take them with them, waiting for them to ring.

In the old days, when you telephoned someone, you had a mental image of where they were. You could visualise the man at the other end of the phone because you knew where his phone was. You knew he would be at his desk, or in his kitchen, or in his Georgian drawing-room under the lovely leather-bound first editions of Victorian pornography.

But now, when people have mobile phones, the person at the other end has no idea where the mobile phoner is unless he tells him. That's why you hear people on trains saying: "Hello, Jim. I'm on the train all right, but I don't think I'll be there in time for the start of the meeting as the service is running 25 minutes late, so could you make sure they discuss the new agenda on repackaging ..."

This also explains why I have not been on a train for the last day or two. If and when the man does ring up offering me the job of editor of *Punch* – which could take time as he obviously has to ring other people first, like, well, like Richard Ingrams, who has always wanted to be ex-editor of *Punch* – then I don't really want to have to discuss it on a train with lots of people listening as I say things into my mobile phone like, "Of course, I'll need whatever McKay was getting plus a few grand more" or, "I would really rather prefer not to come to an office but to edit *Punch* from home, so could you arrange for McKay's mini-bar and cocktail cabinet to be brought round pronto? Oh, taken it all with him, has he?"

Of course, back in the days when we didn't have mobile phones, but were pinned to one spot, we used to fantasise about the future of phones. And the odd thing is that we didn't fantasise about phone mobility. What we fantasised about was being able to see the person we were talking to. It was only a matter of time, we thought, before phones would be combined with TV sets and we could have a telly-phone conversation. And, lo and behold, nothing of the sort happened at all, and phones were not combined with TV sets but with radio sets so we still can't see the person we are talking to, which is ironic because with mobile phones it is more important than ever to see the person at the other end. *No make sure he is actually where he says he is.*

In my case, when I say I am sitting by my phone waiting for a call to the *Punch* editorship, that is only half-true. I am sitting by my phone waiting for anyone to ring. Because when someone rings, I will then be able to locate the position of my phone. Somewhere in the mass of papers on my desk, in the piles of unanswered correspondence, in the stacks of interesting but old newspapers, under the old invoices, receipts, VAT forms, empty Jiffy bags which could probably be reused and unread copies of *Punch*, there lies a phone. I do not know where it is. It is somewhere in there. I wish to make a phone call, but I cannot until I find it. And I cannot find it until someone rings me, and I can detect, from the ringing noise, where it is.

If indeed it is a call from a man offering me the *Punch* editorship, I shall accept gratefully, and say that I will immediately take *Punch* back to the gentle days of the 1950s when you could write mild rambling pieces about your own domestic difficulties, such as the troubles caused by telephones.

He will say it is too late for that kind of thing now and readers wouldn't stand for it any more.

I hope he is wrong.

The safer things get, the more we want to risk

Think about risk. This week, on the day of the Channel Tunnel fire, there was also the first substantial snowfall of the winter. No one, mercifully, died in the fire, but at least two people died on the roads as a direct result of the weather. Yet a fair number of people will be discouraged from using the tunnel, while hardly anyone will stop using the roads.

We have the strangest attitudes to risk. We live in a society which seeks to reduce risk, yet individually we are prepared to take them, maybe even seek them out. Thus we worry about nuclear power and genetic engineering but are perfectly content to drive cars, ride bicycles, or smoke cigarettes.

In a *New Scientist* study, nuclear power ranked right at the top of people's perceived risks, far above terrorism, AIDS and mugging.

Strange? Well perhaps not so strange. There may be a great gulf between the actual dangers of something terrible happening and our perceived fear of it, but there is a certain rationale to our attitudes. For example, we worry much less about the risks we feel we can control, like accidents in the home or when skiing, than those we cannot, like the damage to the ozone layer – or being stuck in a fire under the Channel.

The older we get the more worried we become about risks, because teenagers are notorious for believing they are indestructible. And we discount risks in the future in the sense that we worry far more about things that might go wrong now than about those that might go wrong 20 or 30 years hence; if we did not discount risk in this way, anyone would smoke another cigarette.

The fact that we are bad at assessing risk has been widely noted. Last year John Adams's controversial book *Risk* argued that people were prepared to accept a certain level of risk in their lives and when legislation reduced that risk, they found other ways of increasing it. His most cited example was the introduction of seatbelts in cars, which he argued had little or no effect on the road death toll, which was falling anyway. They may have saved the lives of some people inside the cars, but because they encouraged people to drive faster, more people outside the cars were killed.

Another example was the Davy safety lamp in mines in the last century. This operated at a temperature below the ignition point of methane, and because it cut the risk of explosions was credited with saving the lives of thousands of coal miners. Yet it seems because its invention encouraged mining in more dangerous seams, the number of explosions and deaths actually rose in the years after its adoption.

The fact that most people are bad at assessing risk leads inevitably to inappropriate legislation. Politicians naturally and properly have to represent their voters' views, even if



Hamish McRae

You wear a seatbelt, but you smoke. Taking chances, it seems, is only human

this leads to odd outcomes. In the United States, concern about passive smoking has become so intense that in a friend's office in Washington they are not allowed to smoke outside the building on the pavement – they have to move at least 30 feet away from the front office door.

In any case, badly framed safety legislation can be a very inefficient way of improving safety: it encourages service providers to design to fit the law, rather than to make whatever they are doing really safer for customers.

The fact that a lot of safety legislation is misguided, because of a combination of misinformed popular pressure and incorrect assessment of risk, has already received a lot of attention. But there is still an enormous groundswell of pressure to reduce risk and I guess that for another generation at least western societies will continue to regulate in order to try to reduce this risk. Some of that regulation will be genuinely helpful, but a lot won't.

Indeed the more we try to "manage" risk, the more we may increase it. This is one of the points made in a new book on the subject, out this week, by the American economist Peter Bernstein. *Against the Gods: the remarkable story of risk*. Bernstein argues that schemes designed to cut the risk of a stockmarket fall in 1987 actually contributed to the scale of the crash in October that year.

That is one problem, because when people find that risk cannot be eliminated, they will be deeply resentful. But I think there is a bigger problem which worries me even more. How will society cater for people who want more risk, not less?

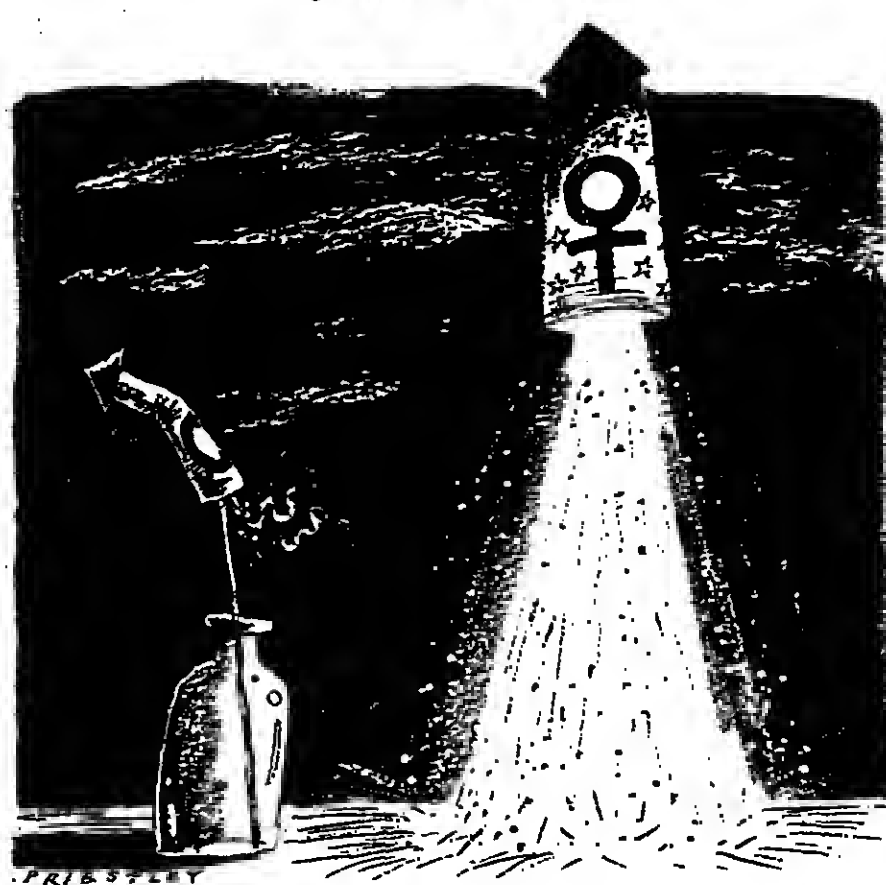
Silly question? Absolutely not. Some people do want more risk. Why do Britons, unlike Germans, Scandinavians or Japanese, skip across the road when the pedestrian lights are red? Why has about one-third of the teenage population of the UK taken ecstasy? Why do people smoke?

One of the great challenges I think that developed countries face is to find ways of catering for people's desire to take risks, without getting out of control and damaging the rest of society. You could say that encouraging activities which seem dangerous but actually are fairly safe, like hang-gliding or parachuting, will provide an outlet for this desire. But while that is fine for the organised and relatively well-off, it does not meet the desires of the less organised. Crime is an obvious outlet for very young offenders there is some evidence that the main attraction is not the money but the buzz.

To say that is absolutely not to argue for lower safety standards on the Channel Tunnel. That would be absurd. But it is to say that each new bit of restrictive legislation ought to be tested against this criterion: does it take the fun out of life, particularly for young people? And if the answer is yes, then we should think hard before pressing ahead.

Why I feel sorry for the boys

by Suzanne Moore



The dead-end of traditional masculinity is imploding and someone has to clean up the mess. Another job for the girls

As Tammy Wynette sang, "Sometimes it's hard to be a woman". Not as hard though as being a man. I am glad I don't belong to that weaker sex. It means that my chances of survival as an infant were automatically better than a boy's, that I was less likely to have been excluded from school or to be unemployed for over a year; it means that my capacity for social and verbal skills was higher than a boy's; it means that I am less likely to kill myself or someone else or indulge in crime. All in all, being female these days increases one's chances of being more flexible, more resilient and cleverer than one's male counterparts but obviously I don't want to get cocky about this.

No, let's keep it a secret and instead fret about a few girls who want to be boys and a few battered husbands. Let's worry that women are becoming too much like men rather than face the reality that men are too much like men, that becoming a man is in itself a problem, that the dead-end of traditional masculinity is imploding and someone has to clean up the mess.

Another job for the girls. A Labour Party consultation document, *Closing the Gender Gap*, by Estelle Morris MP is aimed at tackling the problems of boys' underachievement. Every week new statistics appear in which girls are outperforming boys in yet another area. First it was thought they did well only in single-sex schools and then only in certain subjects at certain levels. Now it appears they are doing better at every level. The "Gazza factor" as one teacher put it, is prevalent among young men. Being seen to work is not cool or laddish enough. Morris's proposals are uncontroversial, suggesting ways of mentoring, monitoring, and disciplining boys. They are strategies to cope with some boys' mourning disaffection and underachievement.

Other female MPs have raised these issues in the House, but where, one wonders, are men who are man enough in this company of slimy over-achievers to stand up and admit to their sex's failures? Why is it that most conversations about gender are had between women?

We are, as the psycho-babblers would say, in denial. We are in denial about the social revolution we are living through and we are in denial about the changes it necessitates. We talk around these issues all the time, aware of them; but public life is dominated, from the right and sometimes from the left, by the narrative of return. We will return to a time when men were men and women were not; we will return to a time of tough discipline and suitable role models; we will return to a time of happy nuclear families. This is pure fantasy and thank God for that.

None of this takes account of the huge economic and cultural shifts that are underpinning the gender gap. We expect more of girls these days and therefore they expect more of themselves. Some of this has to do with feminism but much of it hasn't. A particular set of politics has not produced this culture; rather a set of economic conditions, combined with profound ideological shifts, is responsible. Ideology, I realise, is no longer a fashionable word. The false consciousness beloved of Marxists is now seen as patronising and simplistic twaddle, yet the idea that once implicit ideologies are made explicit they no longer maintain such a strong hold on us is still persuasive.

Feminism in both its radical and populist forms gave women permission to talk about what it means to be a woman, the ideology of femininity itself – its pleasures as well as its constraints. To understand how it is possible to change, to become different kinds of women; and over the last 50 years we have had in change because our lives have changed enormously. The denial about boys' cur-

rent difficulties stems then from the inability or refusal of men to make visible the ideology of masculinity. Boys after all are not entirely different creatures from men. Certain kinds of behaviour are on a continuum – ya-boeing in the Commons, disrupting classrooms. How can we expect our boys to understand the world they are living in when many powerful men want to pretend that nothing has fundamentally changed and that problems are being caused by a few working-class yobboes? I am not asking for some Robert Bly novel-gazing; simply asking that men in public life acknowledge that they are part of the problem rather than the solution. I could be cynical and say that losing power is always difficult and that men must suffer for women's gains, but I don't believe this. I'm not a female supremacist and if we carry on producing hordes of morose boys we will all suffer.

As always, culture pre-empt political discussion. The confessional tone of much recent literature – from Nick Hornby to David Baddiel – does not take masculinity as a given but as something more malleable. These are clever lads whose writing is underpinned by an understanding of what feminism is about.

The commercial rise of the lad is an attempt to find an easy and authentic version of manhood at a time when there is clearly no such thing. It provides the easy markers of a taste for "beer, tits and football" as the defining characteristics of late-20th-century man.

Many would-be lads are simply clueless. The popularity of what I call Lad Drag is understandable but it is a form of disguise, a suffocating identity that can be tried on, a wolf's clothing for these poor lost sheep. It is a dream of escape produced by those who have escaped, consumed by those who never will.

Laddism, however, is just as much a narrative of return as Back to Basics, except with more promise of a good time. Men need desperately to find a narrative of progress that is equally full of fun. In private many men speak of this; in public, however, men are strangely silent on this issue.

If those men in power cannot address a changing world, how can we expect powerless boys to be anything but disaffected. Meanwhile it is left to women to worry about this; but you can't expect us to do it for ever because, as you know, ruling the world is a time-consuming business.

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Islands of uncertainty

Television screens have been filled nightly with pictures of tragic events in Rwanda and Zaire, and the revelation this week that arms were supplied by a British company to those who committed genocide has filled many people with moral outrage. The company alleged to have supplied the arms is Mil-Tec, an Isle-of-Man-registered company. Mil-Tec was administered by BDO Binder in the Isle of Man and all its shareholders and directors are nominees, hiding the true ownership and management of the company. Although Mil-Tec appears to have done nothing illegal, the affair will have reinforced the public's unease about the lack of supervision of offshore companies.

Whenever something nasty hits the headlines from any of the three islands close to the UK – Jersey, Guernsey and the Isle of Man – island politicians respond with platitudes about how well regulated their islands are, and how much more nasty business goes on in the UK.

In fact, the islands are very well regulated in all areas of financial services other than offshore companies. Their supervisory bodies make every effort to ensure that regulation keeps up with international standards and that investors are protected, but every time a scandal breaks it wipes out a lot of the international goodwill created by the supervisors.

The three islands are self-governing UK Crown dependencies. As such they are part of Great Britain, but not of the UK, and their parliaments make all their internal laws. However, the UK is responsible for the islands' defence, international relations and ultimate good government. In this capacity it imposes laws relating to those areas, such as compliance with UN resolutions. Even many islands do not realise that constitutionally the UK has the right to impose any law on the islands.

Fearful of losing their hard-won degree of autonomy, the island governments tend to pre-empt this by managing to pass any required laws themselves. The most recent example of this was the legalisation of homosexuality.

UK governments do not seem concerned enough about the lack of regulation of those forming and administering offshore companies to do anything about it.

The role of an Isle of Man company in supplying arms to Rwanda and Zaire has focused attention on offshore companies. Great Britain's islands must make reforms, argues Sue Stuart

Maybe it is just too handy to have these islands as a filter through which people in the UK can indulge in dubious activities. Does Westminster not know how much Northern Ireland's paramilitary organisations use offshore companies to channel money through?

The islands have all implemented strong anti-money-laundering laws and investigators from other jurisdictions get full co-operation with inquiries from the local police and supervisory bodies. But offshore politicians do not seem to be aware of the enormous amount of work their fraud squads have to handle – and most investigations begin with an offshore company. In all three islands, the use of nominee shareholders and directors is common practice. However, in Jersey and Guernsey the name of the true beneficial owner has to be disclosed to the authorities. And in Guernsey companies have to be formed by a lawyer. These simple requirements certainly seem to cut down on the number of crooks using the Channel Islands.

But no disclosure is required in the Isle of Man, and anyone can form a company, so it is always open day for criminals from all around the world. Mann-based company agents are also allowed to advertise, which leads to a client being able to acquire a

company over the telephone with the minimum checks done on his bona fides. That company will then be administered by the Mann-based agent. In spite of all this, Mann politicians seem surprised when something goes pear-shaped.

Jersey seems to be well established as a place used by Italian fraudsters, in particular. Italian investigations involving Jersey companies have ranged from the Banco Ambrosiano affair to the current trials of Silvio Berlusconi.

Guernsey companies are not much used by crooks now, but the island contains company formation agents who set up companies in other jurisdictions. The bailiwick of Guernsey also contains Alderney and Sark. Sark has no company register but it has the "Sark lark", in which company formation agents in other offshore islands use a number of Sark residents as directors of non-resident companies registered elsewhere. By using Sark directors, Sark becomes the place of residence of the company. As a non-resident company elsewhere, it will pay an annual fee, no income tax, to the authorities where it is registered (in the Isle of Man this is £600), and no tax in Sark, because there is no register. One of the main benefits of "Sarking" a company is that it allows the utmost secrecy – no one anywhere is scrutinising the company or its business. The normal annual fee for a Sark director is £100 per directorship per company, and that is how some Sark residents make their living. They are directors of hundreds of companies about which they know nothing.

All the good work that regulators and police do in these islands is quickly forgotten whenever there is a scandal – and nearly every offshore scandal involves the use of companies. Over the past three years the governments of all three islands have publicly said that they plan to legislate for regulation of this sector. It has not happened yet. Every time they put forward a proposal it is shot down by the company formation agents.

Maybe the island governments should not listen so much to obviously self-interested agents. If the offshore islands really care about their image, they will have to bring the abuse of offshore companies under control.

Crazy about catz and dogz

At the age of 11 Caroline Simpson has finally been allowed to have a pet. Ginger is exactly what she wanted: a Siamese kitten who loves to play, and purrs like mad when petted. She feeds him daily and has even acquired a mouse for him to chase around her home in Tonbridge, Kent.

The odd thing about Ginger is not his colouring (not many ginger-coloured Siamese about) or the fact that he takes cat naps on command and doesn't need a litter box. What makes Ginger special is that he exists only on a CD-Rom. Computer Catz and Dogz originally came from California – providing the best way yet to avoid strict rabies regulations – and the nation loves them. "It has just been crazy," says James Morris, a manager of the software firm Mindscape.

This lends a whole new meaning to playing "cat and mouse" – players can simulate "Cats" instead of "Curses!" – but Mr Morris says he's a virtual cocker-spaniel named Jack. "Both catz and dogz appeal to people who love animals but cannot go to work with them," he says, "and also to kids who aren't allowed to have a real pet."

This is Caroline, and now she and her friends have a total of 13 kittens. Like the real thing, they grow up, hate water, love catnip and get fleas. And, like the real thing, if you are mean to them, they are mean back. Not all catz are as well-fed as

Ginger. "Look, he's starving," exclaims Caroline as Felix, a scrappily black kitten, comes out to play.

What's next? "We don't know what could be coming up next year. We're looking in to the possibilities of Birds and Blokes or Girls and Boys," says Mr Morris. But is this really a good idea? Virtual

boyfriends will be unable to erect shelving or provide the intellectual refreshment of arguing who is to be designated driver. And boys already think girls are unreal: this would only encourage them.

The possibilities are enormous. For example, this really could be the Tory party's chance to go nuclear on the family. Every single parent could have a spouse and every child would have two parents. Want a big sister or brother? No problem. Feeling broody? Babies will cure that soon enough.

Evidently, Mindscape's newest project is something to do with aliens. Get real! What those of us under pressure to provide rodents as Christmas presents want is something called hamsterz. They will need a wheel, a personality, a burrow, lots of food. And when the child loses interest, us grown-ups don't have to feel guilty that we secretly want the rodent to die. Nor will we have to provide cardboard boxes for the inevitable back garden funeral. Instead, one switch of the computer and petz are no longer with us. Bliss.

Ann Treneman

Crisis in Central Africa



"Help me find my mummy"

Imagine the terror and panic for a child separated from loved ones in a vast crowd of people. This is the reality facing thousands of children in Rwanda today as their families make the long trek home.

Save the Children has already provided emergency food and medical supplies to help save lives and our staff are working round-the-clock to protect and reunite children with their families. But we need your help to continue this vital work.

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business & city

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Cook supports single currency and heals rift

Michael Harrison

Robin Cook, the shadow Foreign Secretary, yesterday went a long way towards healing the rift in the Labour leadership over economic and monetary union by backing Britain's entry into a single currency.

Speaking to business leaders in London, Mr Cook gave his most upbeat assessment of the benefits of monetary union and forecast there was a 75 per cent chance that the single currency would proceed.

Mr Cook, hitherto regarded as lukewarm towards EMU, told the Confederation of British Industry's monthly council meeting: "If a single currency proceeds I personally very much doubt whether it is possible in the medium term for Britain to stay out."

He said a question mark remained over whether a single currency would start on time in 1999 but he highlighted the attractions of the single currency.

Mr Cook's comments align him more closely with the shadow Chancellor, Gordon Brown, the shadow cabinet's most enthusiastic advocate of EMU, and will help Labour present a united front on the issue.

He told CBI leaders that if Britain remained outside a single currency it would make sterling more vulnerable to attack by currency speculators.

He said it would be perverse to stay out on the grounds of defending Britain's sovereignty if entry was in the country's economic interests. On the other hand it would be perverse to sign up simply as a symbolic act of Britain's support for Europe.

Mr Cook claimed that whilst the debate within the Conservative Party over EMU was a political one, Labour would take a "hard-headed" decision on whether or not to support a single currency based on the economic arguments.

Europe, he said, was the centre of gravity of economic power and the reason that Britain had attracted more inward investment than any other country in the European Union.

The Government, he added, was pursuing a mirage if it thought that launching a "jihad" against Brussels would win votes. By appearing to be reluctant members of the Community it was undermining Britain's wider interests. "This is not a posture that gives us any leverage within the EU," he said to murmurs of "hear, hear".

He also called on business to

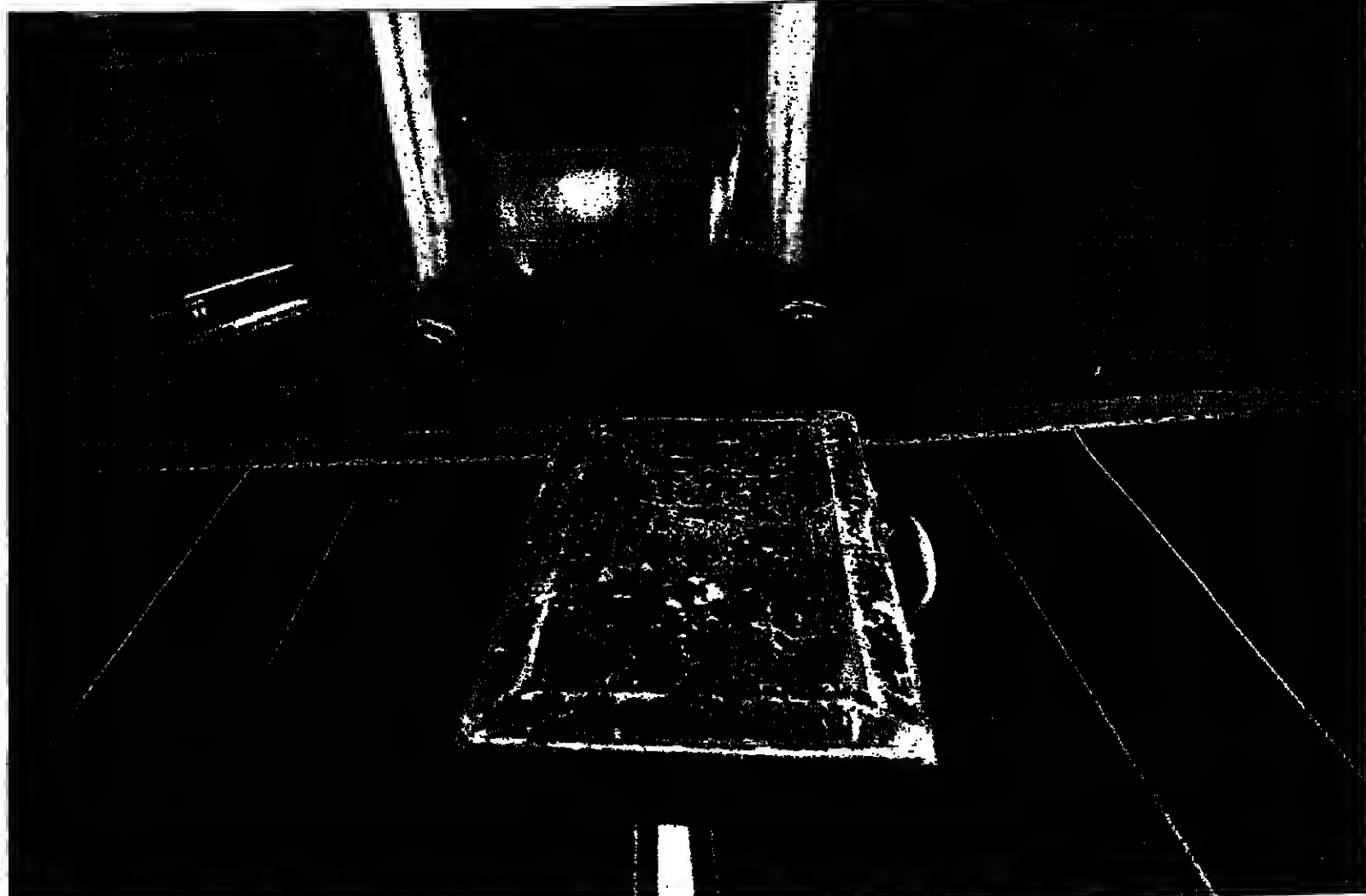
join Labour in helping develop the same kind of consensus approach to Europe that existed on the Continent. "One reason we don't do as well is that we are too busy arguing among ourselves to put forward a united policy."

Mr Cook denied that Labour was "playing chicken" by refusing to say ahead of the election whether or not it would take Britain into a single currency. He said Labour's position in promising a referendum on the subject was consistent with that of the other two main parties.

Mr Cook promised meanwhile that trade would be given top priority in a future Labour government's foreign policy. Labour, he said, would consider appointing businessmen as ambassadors in selected countries which were key export markets for Britain.

He also pledged to increase the number of commercial secondments into the Foreign Office and offer more support for small and medium-sized companies in export markets. One option, he said, would be to set up dedicated business centres in overseas markets such as Germany had done in Singapore.

Sir Colin Marshall, president of the CBI, said he was very encouraged to hear that Labour would put trade at the top of the agenda.



Waiting for Clarke: The contents of the famous red box, pictured at the Treasury yesterday, could seal the Government's fate

Will Kenneth Clarke, the Chancellor, be going for broke in next Tuesday's Budget with a massive pre-election giveaway? Or will he be steering the path of prudence with a fiscally neutral Budget. Either way, what the Chancellor announces next week could seal the Government's fate in the election.

Read about the outcome in 20 pages of unparalleled Budget news, analysis and comment in next Wednesday's Independent.

One day you can afford to miss The Independent

Coverage with a difference. The Independent's team of top journalists, including Andrew Davies, Donald MacIntyre, Polly Toynbee, Gavin Davies of Gold, and others, will be on hand to crunch the numbers and bring you up to the minute analysis of how the Budget affects each category of income group and family unit.

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Safeway set to create 5,200 jobs

Nigel Cope

Safeway is to create 5,200 jobs as part of an expansion programme that will see it open 15 superstores in the next 12 months and a further 15 the year after that.

Though more than half the jobs will be part time, they help make up for 5,000 job cuts made last year under the Safeway JMW restructuring programme. This included the closure of some smaller, older branches and a shake-up of the management structure in stores. Safeway also added 3,250 jobs last year.

Safeway said additional jobs would be created through its joint venture with BP to open 100 convenience stores on petrol forecourts over the next three years. These sites will be rolled out from next April.

Several hundred more jobs will be added under Safeway's new Queuebusters scheme. Several hundred staff will be trained to be "multi-skilled" to be able to operate a check-out, work behind the deli counter, or in whichever part of the store is busy. They will be seen in spot in bright yellow aprons featuring a large blue "Q".

Colin Smith, Safeway's chief executive, announced the job plans yesterday alongside a 7 per cent increase in pre-tax profits to £238m in the six months to 12 October. He said Safeway's policy of targeting family shoppers helped by its high-profile "Harry and Milly" television advertising had proved a success.

"We are operating in a highly competitive sector but we have

successfully focused on winning over big family shoppers. We are picking up speed."

Safeway is exploring entering the financial services market through a joint venture. However, it has ruled out following Sainsbury's with the launch of a fully-fledged bank.

The group is extending its "Shup and Go" scheme which lets holders of Safeway's loyalty card to scan their own shopping using hand-held "guns". A further 50 stores will be included taking the total to 150.

Safeway is also introducing automated pay-out terminals to enable customers to scan their own shopping and pay for it using debit or credit cards without encountering a single member of staff. A test is under way in the store in Reigate, Surrey.

More emphasis will be placed on own-brand products and a toy range is being added to 80 stores.

Safeway's like-for-like sales rose by 5.1 per cent during the period, slightly below the industry average. Net margins have remained steady in spite of the petrol price war which is now easing. "Margins are almost back to where they were last year," Mr Smith said.

Safeway is on target to beat its aim of increasing sales per square foot to £15 by 1998. The current foot to £14.63 compared with £12.86 in 1995.

Safeway's shares fell 1.5p to 369.5p on the results with some analysts describing them as "dull". Safeway's group sales were 9 per cent higher at £3.7bn in the six months.

Comment, page 23

British Energy seals Southern alliance

Chris Godsmark
Business Correspondent

British Energy, the recently privatised nuclear power operator, has secured a long-term alliance to supply power to Southern Electric, the first such deal between a regional electricity company and generator.

The 15-year agreement, expected to be one of several such alliances by British Energy, gives the group a head start over the two other big power generators in England and Wales, PowerGen and National Power, as the industry scrambles to sign up contracts before the market is opened to full competition in 1998.

National Power had revealed earlier this week that it was negotiating with three RECs to create a broad supply alliance which could also include one of the UK's leading supermarkets

chains. The British Energy deal extends a one-year partnership under which Southern buys about 15 per cent of the power generated by the nuclear group in England and Wales.

The new contract is likely to significantly increase the scale of the power purchases, though neither company would disclose the predicted figure, or the price at which the electricity

would be supplied. Dr Robert Hawley, the chief executive, said the aim was to insulate British Energy from the volatility of prices in the electricity pool, the system which sets market prices. Because nuclear power stations have to generate power continuously they act as so-called "price takers" in the pool mechanism, while prices are mostly set by National Power and PowerGen.

He also disclosed that negotiations were taking place with other RECs. "We don't want to get into the situation where all 100 per cent of our output is contracted in this way, but the deal isn't exclusive to Southern Electric. We are talking to other regional electricity companies," Dr Hawley said.

However Dr Hawley dismissed the idea of taking equity stakes in RECs or buying one of the few remaining indepen-

dent power suppliers outright. "We are simple-minded people. I don't want to buy a REC and we've consistently said that."

Informal talks were also taking place with US power utilities aimed at securing contracts to help improve efficiency in nuclear power plants in America.

British Energy yesterday announced a sharp reduction in post-tax losses in the six months to the end of September to £32m, compared with £169m during the same period in 1995. This excludes one-off gains and losses associated with the privatisation and an £813m payment the previous year for the development of the Sizewell B power station.

The improvement came from a 12 per cent rise in the amount of electricity generated through better efficiency and a 10 per cent reduction in operating costs.



Taking insurance: Dr Robert Hawley said British Energy wanted insulation from volatile electricity prices

Imro angry as Deutsche moves control

Jill Treanor
Banking Correspondent

Imro, the investment management regulator, was angered and seriously concerned last night by news that Deutsche Bank was moving control of some of Morgan Grenfell's unit trust business to Frankfurt as a result of the Peter Young scandal in London.

Tessen von Heydebreck, a member of the Deutsche Bank management board, said in Frankfurt that DWS, its German fund management unit, would take responsibility for the risk control aspects of Morgan Grenfell Asset Management's unit trust business.

"Ultimate responsibility for MGAM unit trusts will lie with DWS. We will have risk control," Mr van Heydebreck said.

However, unusually, Imro was not informed of the decision by Morgan Grenfell, which it regulates. Part of this supervision includes analysis of the management structure to consider whether it offers a strong level of internal control.

"Clearly, a separation of related management or compliance functions is not ideal. In some circumstances it may not

be acceptable," Phillip Thorpe, chief executive of Imro said yesterday.

A spokesman for Deutsche Morgan Grenfell in London stressed yesterday that day-to-day control of the unit trust business would continue to be handled in London.

He said Morgan Grenfell was continuing to seek a replacement for Graham Kane,

the former managing director of the unit trust business who resigned because of the affair.

Mr Kane was shown the door along with three other senior executives, including Keith Percy, managing director of the entire MGAM business, and a compliance officer.

The Morgan Grenfell spokesman said yesterday that only internal supervision of the

unit trust operation was being moved and that the institutional business was not affected by the decision.

Imro is still conducting its investigation into the Morgan Grenfell fiasco. The regulator can levy hefty fines against the firm if it uncovers breaches of its rules, which include lapses in internal controls.

Mr Young, sacked in September and now under investigation by the Serious Fraud Office, set up a string of shell companies in Luxembourg and breached limits on the amount of unlisted securities a fund can hold. The discovery of his actions forced Morgan Grenfell to suspend trading its three of its once-top performing funds in early September almost £1.4bn was invested.

Comment, page 23

Spending weighs against tax cuts

Diane Coyle
Economics Editor

The case against cutting taxes in next week's Budget was strengthened yesterday by official figures showing that higher spending by consumers and the Government are driving the economy's growth.

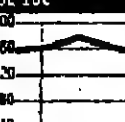
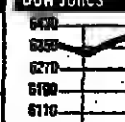
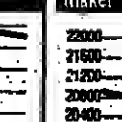
Although investment fell sharply in the latest quarter, the spread of the recovery to manufacturing was confirmed by an upbeat survey from the Confederation of British Industry.

The buoyant news took the pound another two pence to DM2.5326 yesterday. Its exchange rate against a range of other currencies rose 0.8 to 92.8, the highest level for four years, and it also reached a four-year high against the US dollar.

The increase in consumer spending during the third quarter of this year was the highest for three years, at 1.1 per cent, and the annual growth climbed to a post-recession peak of 3.3 per cent. Rising incomes and lower taxes fuelled the increase.

The other main contribution to the economy's third-quarter expansion was a 1 per cent rise in government expenditure. This was the biggest advance since the quarter immediately before the last general election in May 1992. "This can hardly be coincidental," said John O'Sullivan, an economist at NewWest Markets.

With investment spending dropping by 2.2 per cent, negligible stockbuilding and exports less imports roughly flat, the increase in gross domestic product was 0.8 per cent, as initially estimated.

STOCK MARKETS									
FTSE 100			Dow Jones*			Nikkei			
									
*New York Index & graph at CNN.com			FTSE World Index Data						
Indices									
Index	Close	Day's change	Change(%)	1996 High	1996 Low	2004 High	2004 Low	YTD(%)	
FTSE 100	3853.80	-9.00	-0.2	4073.10	3632.30	3910.30	3701.90	1.41	
FTSE 250	4387.00	-3.20	-0.1	4558.80	4015.30	4301.30	4150.30	3.56	
FTSE 350	1970.40	-3.80	-0.2	2022.10	1816.60	1916.60	1861.90	3.91	
FTSE SmallCap	2160.19	+0.39	+0.0	2244.26	1954.06	2154.06	2034.91	3.16	
FTSE All-Share	1945.10	-3.47	-0.2	1994.54	1791.95	1941.95	1865.95	3.65	
New York *	6409.90	-20.12	-0.3	6430.02	5032.94	6382.94	5781.95	3.85	
Tokyo	21143.34	-46.82	-0.2	22869.80	19734.70	21734.70	20767.71	3.73	
Hong Kong	13099.56	-57.90	-0.5	13167.16	10204.87	13024.87	12317.87	1.97	
Frankfurt	2772.34	-2.16	-0.1	2795.80	2253.36	2723.36	2661.36	1.66	
Source: FT Information									



The benefits of privatisation are supposed to be reflected in lower prices to consumers, not spirited away by the state.

Tory rebate would trump Labour windfall tax

Is Kenneth Clarke preparing to cut the ground from under Labour and its windfall tax in next Tuesday's Budget? If he does have a trick up his sleeve, he was keeping it firmly under wraps during yesterday's knock-about in the Commons. In the absence of any detail about how the tax will be applied and who will pay it, Michael Heseltine and John Prescott were largely reduced to trading press cuttings rather than blows.

Should Mr Clarke be in the mood for some advice, however, then here is an idea. Why not trump Labour by announcing that the utilities have agreed to start talking about a voluntary levy payable, not to the Treasury where it would disappear into the entrails of the PSBR, but direct to customers? The utilities might not like it, but it seems a good sight better than the alternative. If they are to see their balance sheets ravaged, then why not for a cause which might at least gain them a bit of goodwill among their customers?

Certainly it has political attractions for a Government facing possible electoral defeat and a Chancellor struggling with his desire to be remembered for fiscal rectitude. A rebate for customers would be tantamount to an election tax bribe, but a bribe paid for by the utilities, not out of the public sector deficit.

Since the financial markets have, supposedly, already discounted a £3bn windfall tax in the share values of the utilities, the damage should not be too great in City deal-

ing rooms. Moreover, a rebate paid in the form of lower fuel and water bills would flow through into the retail price index and thus reassure the markets that the Chancellor is serious about hitting his inflation targets.

But most important of all, it would put Labour on the spot, forcing it either to scrap the rebate or forsake its only firm revenue-raising proposal. A Tory rebate would, of course, hit shareholders as hard as a Labour windfall tax. But it would avoid the arbitrary and unjust nature of the tax by delivering some of the spoils of monopoly direct to customers. This, after all, was the way the system was always meant to work; the benefits of privatisation are supposed to be reflected in lower prices to consumers, not spirited away by the state. The politics of it too is mighty attractive since it would force Labour to choose between being the party of higher bills or the party of higher taxes.

Fantasy? Maybe, maybe not. But if Mr Heseltine really believes that this tax bombshell is going to explode in Labour's face between now and polling day, he will have to do something to prime the device.

City is in danger of becoming a warehouse

Deutsche Bank's decision to place Morgan Grenfell's unit trusts business under its own direct control in Frankfurt is obviously a justified response to a particu-

lar set of circumstances but it also highlights the dangers for the City of the present trend towards foreign ownership. Who and where ownership is based may not seem to matter very much in today's global economy, but clearly it does matter for the City if it begins to lose control of its own destiny.

There are plenty of straws in the wind. Dresdner Bank recently announced that the fund management side of Kleinwort Benson, which it bought last year, would in future be managed out of San Francisco. There are now similar moves to consolidate KB's foreign, derivatives and bonds business into Dresdner's operations in Frankfurt. All this may make sense from Dresdner's point of view but it hardly bodes well for the City. The logical end game is that the City becomes just a warehouse operation, with the control and decision-making lying elsewhere. If you regard the City as little more than a offshore tax haven answerable only to itself, this may not seem terribly important. Given how much the City now contributes to the British economy, however, it would be wrong to think this way. It actually matters quite a lot.

At the time of Big Bang 10 years ago, which allowed foreign ownership for the first time, nobody could have guessed quite how much of the second industry would end up in overseas hands. When all those fuddy-duddy old partnerships finally accepted the inevitable, surrendered to deregulation and sold out, out in their wildest dreams did they

anticipate the degree to which they would vanish from the map or become absorbed into foreign-owned concerns.

With SG Warburg's takeover by Swiss Bank, Britain's last hope of developing an independent international investment bank to compete with the best of them disappeared down the plug, leaving just BZW and NatWest Markets as the only British contenders (both of them owned by big retail banks) anywhere near the big league. So far this has not in any way damaged the City, rather the reverse. If history is any guide, however, it will not always be thus. There is a world of difference between the ruler and the ruled. The City will one day pay the consequences of its surrender.

Safeway may look to Europe once more

David Webster, Sir Alistair Grant's successor as chairman of Safeway, is fond of referring to his new charge as "an immature company in a mature market". And he is not referring to Safeway's use of the toddlers Harry and Molly in its TV ads. What he means is that Safeway, in his opinion, is a relatively underdeveloped company with lots of opportunity to grow.

He has a point. Using measures such as sales per square foot, Safeway is a very distant third to the two big boys Tesco and Sainsbury with plenty of scope to catch up.

By contrast, many Sainsbury's stores are already too busy for customer comfort.

What Safeway has done is seize upon one or two initiatives which highlight its differences with rivals and pummel them for all they are worth. Hence the self-scanning scheme, the automatic payment terminals and all the noise about creches even though they are only 10 per cent of its stores.

The challenge is to maintain the momentum. In some ways Safeway has been fortunate in that it has benefited from Sainsbury's woes. When Sainsbury starts to fight back (and it is showing increasing signs of doing so), Safeway will find the going tougher.

And for all its emphasis on its new superstores, Safeway still has a large number of older, smaller high street shops with limited parking. No room for creches or fancy cafés in these. Safeway has won plaudits in the City for its refusal, thus far, to follow the diversification route by plunging into Europe (like Tesco) or the United States (like Sainsbury's). Management is instead concentrating on growing up in the UK.

But that could change. Mr Webster thinks that as the Single Market becomes a reality, cross-border alliances between European supermarket groups are a certainty. The thinking is that such giants will become necessary if the supermarkets are to maintain their buying power against powerful manufacturing conglomerates. Safeway has already dipped its toe in European waters once. In time, another attempt seems likely.

Labour refuses to spell out windfall tax

Chris Godsmark
Business Correspondent

Labour last night refused to elaborate on how many of the privatised utilities would be included in its planned windfall tax, or how much cash the party intended to raise, in a Commons debate on the policy brought by the Conservatives.

However in a typically tough performance John Prescott, Labour's deputy leader, pledged that no consumer would face bigger bills. He was responding to claims by Michael Heseltine, the deputy Prime Minister, that consumers, shareholders and workers in the companies would all be adversely affected.

During his speech Mr Prescott was asked several times by Kenneth Clarke, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether or not British Telecom would be one of the privatised firms required to pay the tax. However he declined to give further details, beyond saying that the list of companies affected would be outlined in Labour's first budget.

He also reiterated that no final decisions would be taken until the Shadow Chancellor, Gordon Brown, had consulted with the industry regulators.

Flanked by Mr Brown on one side and Alistair Darling from the Party's Treasury team on the other, Mr Prescott made it clear that Labour was committed as ever to the principle of the tax.

He told MPs: "The privatised utilities were sold off cheaply, regulated weakly and were allowed to make excess profits."

Labour intends to raise a levy to put people back to work."

His speech kept former state-owned companies such as BT guessing about Labour's precise definition of a "utility".

Mr Prescott would only say that the tax would apply to "privatised utilities which have made windfall profits" and "all will be considered without fear or favour."

BT has consistently argued that it cannot be classed as a utility because the British phone market has for several years been exposed to full competition.

However he conspicuously failed to use the word "monopoly" in this definition. Earlier, Mr Heseltine had taunted Labour with a letter from Alastair Campbell, Tony Blair's press secretary, which was published in *The Independent* recently. It had suggested that the tax would only apply to "privatised monopoly utilities". Presumably, the electricity generator which faces competition in the UK electricity market, had claimed this meant that it would

almost the same as Labour's current proposals.

Opening the debate, Mr Heseltine had attempted to expose what the Tories believe is Labour's vulnerability on the issue, describing the proposals as "an act of vicious political spite."

He continued: "Behind the windfall tax there is a bill, a real bill. This isn't a levy on utilities. It's a tax on everybody who lives in this country."

He suggested Labour would have to use political interference in the work of the regulators to try to stop prices going up to compensate for the money taken away. In addition, share prices in the taxed companies would fall, affecting millions of people who held shares directly or 10 million more who held pensions which were indirectly invested in utility shares.

Mr Heseltine defended the record of privatisation which he insisted had brought huge benefits to customers in lower prices. He also said most of the industries involved were increasingly becoming exposed to

The privatised utilities were sold off cheaply, regulated weakly and allowed to make excess profits

be excluded.

Labour responded to Conservative jibes by quoting from the 1981 budget speech by the former chancellor, Geoffrey Howe, when the first Thatcher Government announced a one-off levy on windfall profits made by the banks. He claimed the wording on that policy was

competition. "When Labour talk about monopolies they totally fail to understand the revolution in competitive practices which is sweeping the world's markets," he said.

The claims were labled as "hypocrisy" by Mr Prescott, who cited the occasion last year when *Ebba* was wiped off elec-



Head to head: Michael Heseltine (left) and John Prescott had heated exchanges in the Commons yesterday

tricity share prices after Professor Stephen Littlechild, the regulator, changed his mind about the level of price cuts he intended to levy on the region-

Treasury spokesman, who agreed with the Conservatives that millions of small investors would be hit.

"It simply isn't honest to say it's a victimless tax. It is naive to believe there are no impacts and no one would be affected."

Winding up his speech Mr Prescott had argued that there was no longer any serious debate about whether excess profits had been made by the utilities. Referring to the huge share price gains made since privatisation, he explained: "There is a mass of evidence... it was the excess profits that fueled the fat cat salaries. Case after case shows that the taxpayer was short changed."

The attack on the proposals was later joined by Malcolm Bruce, the Liberal Democrats'

IN BRIEF

• Burger King, a subsidiary of Grand Metropolitan, said yesterday it had closed 20 outlets, affecting 360 jobs. The company, which has over 400 restaurants in the UK, said that where possible it was trying to offer staff alternative employment at other restaurants, but it was unable to give an exact figure on how many jobs would be lost.

• Heads continued to roll at Istock, the building materials group, yesterday after Anthony Hopkins, responsible for its building products division, resigned with immediate effect. Philip Mengel, the group's former US brickmaking head who took over as chief executive last week from Ian Maclellan, assumes his responsibilities. A spokesman for Istock said the group was discussing the details of Mr Hopkins' departure but gave no reason for his leaving. After a flurry of acquisitions in the past 12 months, Istock has become Britain's biggest brick manufacturer.

• Morgan Crucible confirmed its intention to float the businesses in its aerospace, sensors and instruments division in a new company, Emblem Technology. The businesses, which achieved sales and operating profits for the year to 4 January 1996 of £36.4m and £4.3m respectively, are based in the US and UK. Observers said the deal could raise £40m.

• Argent Group has sold the Mayflower Retail Park, Basildon, to Scottish Widows for £29.5m. This is the first retail park purchased by the fund and reflects their strategy of building a holding in this sector. The park currently produces an income of £1.82m.

• In the US claims for state unemployment benefits rose 17,000 to 344,000 for the week ended 16 November from a revised 327,000 the previous week, the Labor Department said. The consensus forecast had been for jobless claims to rise 2,000 to 330,000. This is the highest level of jobless claims since the week ending 13 July.

• The DTI should have considered the possibility that the proceeds from the sale of the five regional coal businesses would be in excess of its initial valuation, according to a report by a cross-party Select Committee of Public Accounts. The DTI had estimated proceeds would be £490m-£672m. Gross proceeds reached £955m. According to its report, the committee considered "that the department should have envisaged the possibility that some such premium might be offered."

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Digital TV set back by DTI delay

terrestrial television. The DTI argues that Ofcom, which would regulate the "conditional access" to digital services, has adequate scope to ensure a competitive market.

American deal with Boeing worth \$20bn

on West

Three on West Coast shortlist

nounced as preferred bidder for the extensive CrossCountry rail route. Virgin is also part of the London & Continental Railways consortium which runs Eurostar trains.

Sugar sours Man results

"Clinton has been re-elected and he will do something about it in due course," said Mr McGrath.

£180m issue by United revives talk of TV bid

had instructed it to write off massive problem loans in the first half of the year to 30 September. This led to the bank having an excess of liabilities over assets.

Japan forces struggling bank into liquidation

first half of the year to 30 September. This led to the bank having an excess of liabilities over assets.

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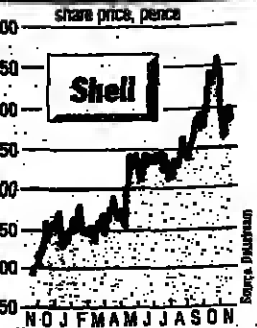
175

market report / shares

Data Bank

FTSE 100
3953.8 - 9.0
FTSE 250
4397.0 - 3.2
FTSE 350
1970.4 - 3.8
SEAQ VOLUME
746.5m shares,
35,978 bargains
Gifs Index
94.59 + 0.31

Share spotlight



National Power surges ahead with help from NatWest

NatWest Securities is emerging as the utilities' friend. A day after the investment house put the signals at green for Railtrack it gave another utility, National Power, a powerful push.

National Power fell on Wednesday on disappointment with its figures. Ian Graham at NatWest clearly believes the stock market got it wrong.

Profits, after exceptional charges, were little changed, the dividend in line with expectations and "we continue to believe that the current yield falls to value the likely income stream", he said.

National Power was the best-performing blue chip, almost recovering the profits-inspired fall with a 17p gain to 452p. And Railtrack continued its remarkable progress, advancing a further 10p to a 354p peak.

Other utilities made progress, ironically on the day the Commons debated the

Labour Party's proposed wind-fall tax.

PowerGen was up 9.5p to 588p; there was a sprinkling of gains in the water sector and London and Yorkshire brightened on the electricity pitch.

There was, however, some doubt whether NatWest could claim full credit for National Power's surge. A story has been bobbing around the market for weeks that Shell could descend on one of the generators, with National Power seen as the more likely target.

Shell, and to a lesser extent British Petroleum, is currently the market's bidder for all seasons. And the general view is any bid will be a mega affair with a high chance a utility will be the target.

British Gas is another accorded the distinction of Shell interest. Talk of corporate action, with Shell as the favoured predator, had drifted rather lazily around until excitement



MARKET REPORT

DEREK PAIN

stock market reporter of the year

was generated by weekend reports of a deal.

After flaring 24p to 232.5p, British Gas has subsided, closing 6.6p lower at 222p, not even the slightest hint of Shell interest has been discovered.

Shell and the other leading oil shares gave ground, unsettled by rumours a shipping company had defaulted on a contract. Shares of Shell lost 10.5p to 981p and BP 6.5p to 678p.

The rest of the market suffered another session of Budget-inspired inactivity, drifting aimlessly. Footsie ended 9 points down at 3,953.8.

The malaise is even more pronounced among second

and third liners. Dealers are finding it increasingly difficult to trade lines in medium and small companies. "There are no takers," complained one stockbroker. The FTSE supporting 250 index closed 3.2 down at 4,397.

Besides the Budget uncertainty, the market remains unsettled by higher interest rate fears and sterling's strength. Government stocks were, however, encouraged by the pound's performance scoring gains of up to £11/16th.

Guinness was pulled another 6p higher to 445.5p. Cazenove was said to be positive and the LVMH share

sale story, never far below the surface, emerged again. LVMH has 21 per cent of the spirits and stout group and, according to popular theory, is busy sounding out institutions about selling all or part of its stake. The LVMH holding is worth around £1.7bn, which would represent a huge swallow for a market in such subdued form.

RTZ, helped by the firmer copper price, made more headway, reaching 964p, up 22p.

There was, briefly, a buzz of excitement around Cable & Wireless. A trade of 115 million shares at 476.5p was printed. The market was perplexed. Stake building ahead of a bid? Before thoughts could be put together, it was admitted the deal had been overstated; it was, in fact, a much less startling 115,000 shares. The mistake seemed to sum up the perverse state of the market.

Cable shares ended 5.5p down at 476p.

Inspirations, the holidays group, lost a further 4p to 68.5p on worries it was encountering more trading difficulties but newcomer Sunaboard ended at 3.75p from a 3p placing.

Maid, the on-line information group ruffled by cash call fears, recovered 19p to 249.5p on talk of a collaboration deal with a Japanese group.

NSM, the coal and plant hire group, crashed 19.5p to 23p on a warning of losses and Baldwin, the restaurant chain, fell 12.5p to 117.5p.

Reflex, which has developed a novel technology to make reflective inks for clothing, gained 5p to 129p. The group, which arrived on AIM at 40p a share in April, is placing 560,000 shares at 125p (7.37 per cent of the enlarged capital) through stockbroker Peel Hunt. The £500,000 proceeds will be used for working capital.

Shares of Electrophoretic International are looking decidedly sick. The diagnostic research group is striving to identify protein markers as a way to diagnose BSE in live cattle and working on a patent for identifying CJD, the human equivalent of mad cow disease. Its shares, 180p at the start of the year, have fallen to 37.5p.

Jarvis is back in the takeover frame. The shares jumped 10p to 133p. A bid from Amey is thought likely. Both have railway maintenance companies. One suggestion is Amey could bid with Barratt Developments which would take the Jarvis construction side.

Car Group, a second hand car dealer trading as Car Supermarkets, is coming to market. Shares are being placed at 138p.

Company	Price	Change
Alcoholic Beverages		
...
Banks, Merchant		
...
Banks, Retail		
...
Engineering Vehicles		
...
Extractive Industries		
...
Investment Companies		
...
Leisure & Hotels		
...
Oil, Exploration		
...
Oil, Integrated		
...
Other Financial		
...
Pharmaceuticals		
...
Printing & Paper		
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Property		
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Support Services		
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Telecommunications		
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Textiles & Apparel		
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Tobacco		
...
Transport		
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Water		
...
Rights Issues		
...
Recent Issues		
...
Distributors		
...

Company	Price	Change
Building Construction		
...
Chemicals		
...
Electronics		
...
Food Manufacturers		
...
Food Distribution		
...
Household Goods		
...
Insurance		
...
Investment Funds		
...
Life Assurance		
...
Media		
...
Metals		
...
Non-Ferrous Metals		
...
Plastics		
...
Real Estate		
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Services		
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Software		
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Telecommunications		
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Utilities		
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Wine		
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Company	Price	Change
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'You ain't going to get screwed,' Bates promises

Patrick Toohy

Ken Bates, chairman of Chelsea Village, made his own inimitable contribution to the corporate governance debate yesterday by urging wary shareholders to trust him and his fellow directors on the thorny issue of share options.

"Have faith that you ain't going to get screwed by the guys on this board," he told a questioner at the company's maiden annual meeting who was worried about the potentially dilutive effects of Chelsea's executive share option scheme.

Mr Bates also insisted the board was not unstable despite the resignation of three directors since Chelsea Village, owner of the football club, was floated on the Alternative Investment Market this year.

The latest departure came a fortnight ago when Peter Middleton abruptly resigned as non-executive director after losing out to Mr Bates in a boardroom power struggle.

Mr Middleton, a leading figure in the City, left after Mr Bates refused his request to appoint an independent executive director to the board following the sudden death last month of Matthew Harding, the insurance industry millionaire who held a quarter of Chelsea Village's shares.

Mr Bates told shareholders it was "not wise to discuss at the present time" the reason for Mr Middleton's resignation.

On the financial front, Mr Bates said he did not expect Chelsea Village to be cash positive until the development of Stamford Bridge, the company's West London stadium, is completed in 1998.

Only after a cash positive position was achieved would the board consider paying a dividend, he added.



Eye on the ball: Ken Bates tried to allay fears about the potentially dilutive effect of executive share options

Last week Mr Bates claimed to be well on the way to raising £30m to continue the development, which had been thrown into doubt by Mr Harding's death in a helicopter accident.

The Stamford Bridge redevelopment involves a 160-bed hotel, four restaurants, a 1,000-capacity banqueting suite, a 10,500 sq ft merchandising centre, a seven-room business centre and 24,000 sq ft of serviced offices.

Mr Bates said completion of the South Stand by the end of 1997 would bring Stamford

Bridge's capacity to 34,000, adding that the planned redevelopment of the West Stand would increase capacity further to 44,000.

Designs for the redevelopment of the West Stand are at an advanced stage and a planning application to the local council will be made in the first week of December. Building work should start in May 1997.

Mr Bates said that when the Stamford Bridge development was complete, it would be one of the most overdeveloped 12-acre sites in the world.

Revamped Storehouse good value

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

EDITED BY TOM STEVENSON

There are two sharply divergent schools of thought on Storehouse and which one you adhere to will determine whether you think the company's share price slump over the past year is wholly justified or one of the biggest valuation anomalies on the market. Having tumbled from 361p in April to yesterday's close of 275.5p, up 6p, Storehouse has been one of the worst performers in recent months.

That seems a harsh assessment of a company that has grown underlying profits from £16m in 1992 to an estimated £126m this year and £145m next time. On the face of it Keith Edelman, former managing director of Carlton, has done a tremendous job since joining Terence Conran's retail rag-bag three years ago, cutting costs, freshening up the appearance of a tired bunch of high street has-beens and sharpening buying and merchandising.

The trouble, according to the bearish camp, is that Storehouse has grown profits without any improvement to the top sales line. That matters for two reasons. First, margin improvements from good housekeeping are finite - without pushing bigger volumes, profits growth will falter. It has also triggered scepticism about accounting policies that have allowed that apparent magic.

Half-year figures yesterday confirmed the group's difficulty in pushing sales in its remaining Bhs and Mothercare stores (it sold Bazaar recently). Same store growth of 3 per cent at Bhs and a fall of 2 per cent from Mothercare shops showed how dependent Storehouse is on making a recent acquisition of Childrens World.

Against that background, increasing underlying profit before exceptional items (the £20.5m one-off cost of integrating Childrens World) by 13 per cent to £37.5m was once again impressive. Sales were up 14 per cent, half of that for like, driven by another strong performance from the rapidly growing overseas franchise arm. The interim dividend rose a tenth to 3.3p.

Bulls of Storehouse argue that criticisms of Storehouse's management are without foundation and amount to little more than a decision by some analysts that they don't like the company. They also dismiss the accounting worries as scaremongering and suggest the recent price fall has made the stock one of the best value in the sector.

On the basis of pre-tax profits this year of £126m, the shares stand on a prospective price/earnings ratio of 13.5, falling to under 12 the following year if Storehouse makes £145m. That represents a sizeable discount to the market as a whole compared to the pre-

Waddington wraps up profits

Waddington, the plastic cups to direct mail printing group, is at last showing signs of delivering on its promise. After a lengthy period of restructuring and investment, including the sale of the Monopoly and Cluedo games business two years ago, Waddington claims to be firing on seven of its eight cylinders.

This is supported by the announcement yesterday of pre-tax profits up 36 per cent to £15.5m in the six months to September. Even stripping out losses since disposed of, the underlying rise remains a healthy 25 per cent.

The one cylinder still misfiring as far as Waddington is concerned is the UK cartons business. Profits there fell 15 per cent despite a 17 per cent rise in

sales and it is clear that Waddington is having difficulty handling the supplier rationalisation measures being undertaken by big customers like Unilever, Nestlé and Colgate despite its success in winning this much-vaunted "pan-European sourcing" business. Waddington believes things will be sorted out by the year-end and the cracking performance in Europe, where both sales and profits were up by around a quarter, suggests it may be right. Overall, cartons profits were up 9 per cent at £4.6m in the six months.

The group is less worried about the specialist printing mail-shot operation, where profits down 6 per cent at £3.4m were blamed on the installation of new hi-tech presses and a leaner mix of business. The group's investment should leave it well placed to cash in on the increasing importance of sophisticated direct mail in marketing products. But Waddington has been heavily reliant on the one-off bonanza created by building society conversions and flotations and it remains to be seen whether that business can be replaced.

Elsewhere, both the upmarket plastic cups to food containers and phar-

maceutical packaging divisions are tanking ahead. Profits growth of 61 and 55 per cent respectively was driven by acquisitions, but new business growth is strong. A contract with Boston Markets, a US take-away restaurant chain, should deliver £25m (£15m) of business by the year-end.

Full-year profits of £32.5m would put the shares, up 6p at 264.5p, on a forward multiple of 12. Good value.

Wiseman milks Scottish market

In Britain's highly competitive milk market, the strategy of Robert Wiseman Dairies certainly stands out from the crowd. While Unigate and Northern Foods have been scaling down their milk operations to cope with the rapid decline of doorstep deliveries, Wiseman has been doing the reverse. Since coming to the stock market in March 1994, Alan Wiseman's group has been buying up smaller dairies to build market share. It now has almost half the market in Scotland, a figure that will rise to around 90 per cent if its proposed deal to buy rival dairy, Scottish Pride, is cleared by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. It is also making a push into northern England with a new milk processing plant in Manchester.

Robert Wiseman's advantage over its larger rivals is that it has never really had much of a doorstep milk business. So while rivals have had to cope with painful downsizing, Wiseman has been able to concentrate on developing state-of-the-art plants to service supermarket clients. Its Manchester plant is geared up to supply 100 per cent of its output to the supermarkets.

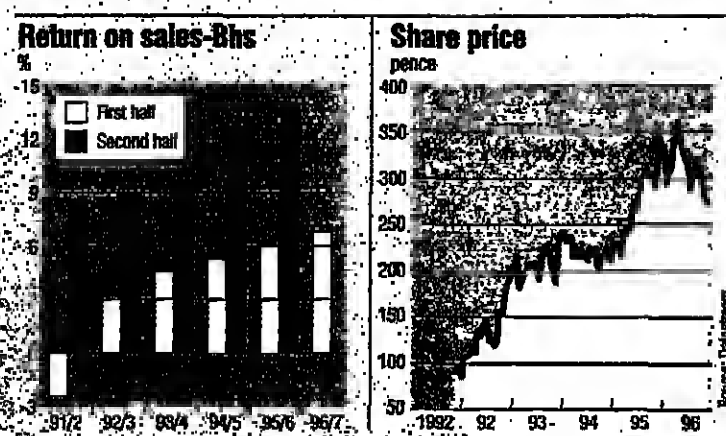
Though Wiseman shares have performed strongly since their flotation in March 1994, the outcome of the Scottish Pride deal is crucial to future performance. If the deal is cleared the group should enjoy several more years of earnings growth. If it fails and the prize goes to a rival such as MD Foods which is very aggressive on price, Wiseman could find its margins under pressure. A decision from the MMC is expected next month.

In the meantime, acquisitions helped boost first-half profits to £6.1m from £4.6m. Like Northern Foods, margins have been hit due to the weak prices of bulk cream. On a more positive note it has continued to increase sales to supermarkets. BZW is forecasting full-year profits of £12.5m. With the shares 15p lower at 174p yesterday they trade on a forward rating of 15. Hold.

Storehouse: at a glance

Market value: £1,180m, share price 275p

Five-Year record	1994	1995	1996	1995	1996
Pre-tax profits (£m)	62.4	90.8	110	35.4	17.0
Dividends per share (pence)	5.5	6.3	7.2	3.0	3.3



Glenmorangie makes case for higher margins

Tom Stevenson
City Editor

Malt whisky maker Glenmorangie's new strategy of focusing on higher-margin cased sales rather than bulk turnover to the whisky blenders appeared to pay off in the six months to September with group sales rising 26 per cent and operating profits bounding ahead by almost a third.

Shares in the company, which used to be known as Macdonald Martin Distilleries, jumped 55p to 81.5p on the news.

Geoffrey Maddrell, chairman, said: "These results confirm that the company is on course. We are achieving our strategy aimed at growth and improved quality of earnings and are meeting our planned financial targets whilst effecting major changes."

The fortunes of Scotch whisky distiller Glenmorangie have been transformed since Mr Maddrell, former boss of textiles group Total, was installed as chairman in 1994. He shifted the group's strategy to heavy investment in marketing premium brands, including the Glenmorangie and Glen Moray single malts.

Single malts have been the fastest-growing part of an otherwise stagnant whisky market in recent years. According to the Scotch Whisky Association sin-

gle malts grew by 5 per cent in the year to July. Against that growth, Glenmorangie increased sales of cased malt by 30 per cent.

The US market continued to act as the motor of growth with the core brand growing by 36 per cent in America. In the UK, sales in the off-trade were 15 per cent higher. That made up for slower-than-expected sales in India where demand for bottled-in-India Scotch is growing more slowly than anticipated.

Asia is growing in importance as a market for Scotch and Glenmorangie's Highland Queen brand is big in India. In China a joint venture has been established to produce whisky and local spirits.

Sales in the period grew 26 per cent to £22.8m with cased sales within that total increasing by 69 per cent. Operating profit increased by 32 per cent to £5.42m while after a rise in interest payable, pre-tax profits were 7 per cent higher at £4.3m.

While maintaining some traditions, such as its insistence on maturing its whisky in Ozark Mountain north-facing white oaks, Glenmorangie has taken the axe to outdated bottling and packaging facilities and invested heavily in modern production facilities on a new 32-acre site. Mr Maddrell said he was confident of a buoyant Christmas.

Babcock returns to the black

Magnus Grimond

Restructuring in its German materials handling business has helped push Babcock back into the black, but the famous engineering group surprised analysts by halving its interim dividend just a year after restoring the payment.

Profits before exceptional items came in at £2.7m in the six months to September, replacing a loss of £17.1m in the immediately preceding period. The interim dividend is being cut from 1.25p to 0.625p, which the company says reflects the fall in earnings following the £26m exceptional profit gained

last time from the sale of the Renfrew-based boiler making business.

John Parker, chairman, said: "The rehabilitation programme has been tougher and more demanding than was envisaged at the outset. However, in the last six months we have achieved a number of positive developments."

The turnaround has seen the material handling division replace a loss of £14m in the last full year, mainly in Germany, with £985,000 profits in the latest period. Mr Parker said they had cut 40 per cent of the German workforce and appointed Dr Gernot Schafer as its managing director.

IN BRIEF

• Shares in NSM more than halved at one stage yesterday after the mining group warned it expected to make a loss in the half year to September and announced it was in talks with its banks. The group said the US investment bank PaineWebber had been appointed to sell its US operations, which was likely to be done at a "substantial" discount to net assets. Other assets are also being lined up for sale. The discussions with bankers centre on the group's immediate short-term working capital requirements and the capital structure resulting from the proposed disposal. NSM said its main business would be in south Wales, supported by opencast mining operations in England and Scotland after the latest deals. The shares closed at 23p, down 19.5p.

• Avresco, the television facilities group, is tapping shareholders for £7.1m to finance its capital expenditure programme and reduce gearing which stood at 45 per cent in September. Shares in the placing and open offer are being allocated on a two-for-seven basis at 282p. The group said it had spent £6.5m on capital equipment and investments in the six months to September. It now planned around £5m of capital expenditure, including Sony Jumbo Iron screens and new projection and camera equipment. Further consideration of £1.5m (£900,000) may also be due on its minority investments next year, the group said. Avresco announced that profits had more than doubled to £1.76m in the six months to September and it is raising the interim dividend by a third to 2p.

• Argent, the property group, has sold a retail park to mutually-owned life insurer Scottish Widows for £29.5m. The price fetched for the Mayflower retail park in Basildon represented a premium to book value, Argent said. The deal is Scottish Widows' first foray in the sector.

• Development Securities' Milton & Shire House is fully let after the completion yesterday of a letting of 60,000 square feet to Linklaters & Paines, the City law firm. The site was bought in 1994 on behalf of Haus Invest, an open-ended property fund of Commerzbank, Germany's third biggest bank.

• Macdonald Hotels, which came to the market in March, announced a 15 per cent rise in profits for the half year to September, during which it acquired five hotels to take its portfolio to 22. Occupancy in the six-month period of 68 per cent was achieved at an average room rate of £42.64 to give an average yield per room of £29.04, up 4 per cent on the previous year. The shares, which came to the market at 145p, closed 1p higher at 211p.

Company Results	Turnover £	Pre-tax £	EPS	Dividend
Avonco (Q)	10.8m (8.7m)	1.76m (0.81m)	10.1p (5.9p)	2p (1.5p)
Babcock Int (Q)	32.0m (34.4m)	4.58m (11.2m)	1.3p (10.7p)	- (-)
British Energy (Q)	85.6m (1.72m)	41.8m (533m)	81.3p (7.9p)	4.5p (-)
City & London (Q)	1.8m (1.47m)	0.48m (0.44m)	4.54p (5.83p)	1.7p (1.54p)
Chloride Group (Q)	64.4m (69.0m)	4.78m (5.54m)	1.55p (2.1p)	0.18p (0.133p)
Dart Group (Q)	26.3m (35.0m)	2.41m (2.02m)	10.1p (8.9p)	2.1p (-)
David Shaw Assets (Q)	0.74m (0.48m)	0.27m (0.14m)	3.34p (1.85p)	3p (-)
DBS Management (Q)	55.8m (33.8m)	2.72m (1.31m)	22.5p (12.9p)	8p (5.5p)
Edi (Q)	56.8m (54.3m)	-1.14m (2.42m)	-0.07p (0.88p)	1.2p (2.1p)
ED & F Man Group (Q)	- (-)	27.2m (32.8m)	6.9p (8.5p)	3.4p (3.2p)
Glenmorangie (Q)	22.8m (16.1m)	4.3m (4.02m)	122.0p (20.83p)	13.025p (-)
Glaxo (Q)	20.8m (19.3m)	-1.2m (0.58m)	-10.3p (4.7p)	1p (2.5p)
Lowland Lambert (Q)	40.4m (34.4m)	6.0m (6.2m)	5.4p (5.9p)	2.2p (2.5p)
Macdonald Hotels (Q)	19.2m (15.4m)	4.58m (2.72m)	5.79p (4.1p)	1.5p (1p)
Manning Street Project (Q)	3.51m (0.83m)	1.14m (0.14m)	4.44p (2.28p)	3.7p (0.2p)
On Demand (Q)	11.4m (8.7m)	-2.5m (3.6m)	-3.6p (7.22p)	- (-)
Quadrant (Q)	62.3m (46.0m)	18.0m (10.0m)	10.6p (16.3p)	8.3p (8.15p)
Reval (Q)	41.4m (43.5m)	16.1m (16.8m)	13.3p (12.5p)	8p (8p)
Robert Wiseman Dairies (Q)	51.0m (58.3m)	8.1m (4.6m)	5.47p (4.47p)	1.15p (1p)
Sainsbury (Q)	3.72m (3.49m)	22m (21.4m)	14.3p (13.2p)	4.4p (4.05p)
Shelton (Q)	2.72m (2.73m)	-91.1m (43.8m)	-1.56p (0.18p)	- (-)
Shirecliffe (Q)	591m (618m)	37.5m (33.3m)	6.1p (5.3p)	3.3p (3p)
Site Holdings (Q)	12.0m (10.0m)	0.65m (0.23m)	6.9p (2.4p)	2p (-)
Southdown (Q)	28.3m (20.0m)	1.38m (1.13m)	14.5p (12.3p)	11.5p (11.5p)
Stapac (Q)	0.63m (0.32m)	-0.86m (0.85m)	-2.91p (2.27p)	- (-)
Stark Waterworks (Q)	4.53m (4.32m)	1.3m (1.7m)	19.3p (18.3p)	4.2p (3.85p)
Waddington (Q)	156m (144m)	15.5m (11.5m)	10.54p (7.9p)	4.4p (4p)

(P) - Profit (Q) - Quarter (T) - A share

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business

Long-standing policyholders do not deserve much compensation

Tens of millions of pounds are being handed out to the owners of Britain's insurance companies and building societies as they convert to conventional companies with ordinary shareholders.

Yet it is extraordinary that, with so much at stake, and seven years after the first large-scale demutualisation, there is still a complete muddle over how to distribute the proceeds fairly to the owners – the policyholders, depositors and borrowers.

Building societies have already thrown up a fair share of anomalies in the way they pay their former owners for agreeing to give up mutual status.

Abbey National was the first to convert to a bank in 1989, and gave a flat-rate reward in shares to all qualifying customers, regardless of how much business they did with the society. Other societies decided the fairest way was to relate payments to the size of members' deposits and loans, until Alliance & Leicester caused a row last month by switching back to flat-rate payments, just like Abbey National.

But these differences among the building societies about what constitutes fairness pale into insignificance beside those thrown up by life insurers, where questions of compensation are proving far more complicated.

Norwich Union will be the first life insurer to float on the stock market, but many others have already dropped mutual status to allow themselves to be bought by another company. In all cases, with profits policyholders, the owners, must be compensated for giving up control.

Most people have assumed that payments should be larger for those who have been members for a long time and have built up substantial funds. This follows the conventional building society model (excluding, of course, the anomalies of Alliance & Leicester and Abbey National).

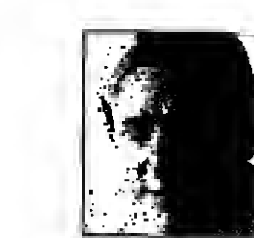
Jim Stretton, chief executive of Standard Life, has thrown the cat among the pigeons by suggesting that the fair method for insurance companies is exactly the opposite of the commonly accepted practice.

Mr Stretton has an axe to grind because he is a determined opponent of demutualisation. But he says the shorter the time a policyholder has been with a company and the lower the funds built up, the higher the compensation should be. Perverse though this sounds, there is a compelling logic to it, which derives ultimately from the different behaviour of building societies and life insurers.

Many building societies have run themselves just like banks, accumulating large reserves to expand their businesses, instead of handing their profits back to their owners in the form of lower mortgage interest and higher deposit rates.

The characteristic that sets mutual insurers apart from building societies is that they have always routinely distributed most of their profits to their policyholders through annual and terminal bonuses.

There is a fuzzy dividing line, because insurers also build up their reserves to a certain extent from their profits, as their businesses grow. But the basic philosophy, that the financial success of the organisation



Peter Rodgers
'Mr Stretton argues that payments should be reduced with the length of time a policy has been held'

should be shared with customers each year, is much more evident among insurers than building societies.

Some building societies have belatedly realised that this is the only way to justify the continuation of mutual status, and have begun to distribute their profits by giving cheaper deals

on mortgages, and better deposit rates.

Mr Stretton's argument is that long-standing policyholders of mutual insurance societies have already received their fair rewards as owners, because the societies' profits have been used over the years to improve their bonuses. Indeed, he goes further, and says the policyholders who deserve the most compensation are those who have taken out policies just ahead of demutualisation.

Therefore payments to policyholders for accepting demutualisation should be structured so they reduce with the length of time a policy has been held.

Mr Stretton says: "The customer whose policy matures one day before demutualisation takes place deserves no compensation, because his or her policy has been fulfilled under the terms and conditions he or she originally contracted for. However, anyone who has just taken out a policy, or who may be committed to the process of taking out a policy, suffers the greatest change and the greatest risk that the outcome for them may be substantially worse than they were originally led to expect."

In other words, a policyholder who has recently joined is shortchanged by the loss of mutually. Having signed up expecting the long-term benefits of mutual ownership, the pol-

icyholder becomes just another customer of an ordinary company. The longer the policy has to run after conversion, the more the cumulative shortfall will be.

This argument only stands up if there is evidence that mutual societies produce better results than proprietary insurers. It is certainly true that 10 per cent of the profits in the life funds of proprietary companies belong to shareholders, whereas the entire amount belongs to with-profit policyholders in a mutual company.

Michael Doerr, chief executive of Friends Provident, calculates that his mutual policyholders receive 15 per cent more in bonuses than they would after a switch to proprietary ownership. There is a gearing effect, because Friends is owned by a diminishing percentage of its members. The proportion of with-profit policies on the books is falling as it diversifies into other areas of insurance.

Last month, *The Independent* published research by John Chapman, a former senior official at the Office of Fair Trading, showing that mutual societies produced better returns for their customers. Mr Stretton produces similar evidence that mutuals perform better than the rest (see table).

If Mr Stretton is right, companies such as Scottish Equitable, that have paid nothing to new policyholders and most to those who have been with the society a long time, have got it back to front.

If there is so much disagreement about the fundamentals, perhaps a ball should be called to the demutualisation process while the actuarial and insurance professions sort out who owns what and how much they are owed.

Otherwise, when somebody does establish to everyone's satisfaction what fairness means, vast numbers of people will find they have been robbed and others will have received rewards they do not deserve.

With-profit policy performance 1986-95				
Percentage of average payout	Endowment assurances	Personal pensions	Total	
Mutuals	102.8	102.3	102.6	
Proprietary	92.2	97.5	97.3	
Expense ratios %				
1995	1995	1995	1995	
Acquisition*	7.2	10.9	7.7	10.3
Renewal**	7.2	7.9	7.7	8.4
Lapse rates 1995 %				
First year	5.3	8.3	5.3	
Average	5.4	7.8	5.4	
*of new business **of existing business				
Source: Standard Life				

Headed for divorce, but Pammy keeps her bottle

PEOPLE & BUSINESS



The good old days: Pamela Anderson and Tommy Lee

Readers will have heard of the highly publicised marital split between *Baywatch* babe Pamela Anderson and her tattooed rock star husband, Tommy Lee.

You may not have realised, however, the threat this bad publicity represents to Richard Branson's Virgin Cola, which introduced the "Pammy" cola bottle last February, based on Anderson's curvaceous form.

Nick Kirkbride, managing director of Virgin Cola, glossed over Anderson's marital difficulties yesterday, saying: "We still love her."

Asked whether Lee, the drummer with Motley Crue, would make a suitable substitute as a cola bottle, or whether Virgin would change the Pammy bottle, Mr Kirkbride said: "I'm not sure what Tommy Lee would look like, or whether it would be legal to put him in the shape of a bottle."

American businessmen often appear bash and self-publishing, but few can equal John E. Inlay for sheer impact.

Mr Inlay is over here to push his book *Jungle Rules: How to be a Tiger in Business*, a light and amusing read. It tells how he turned around his computer software company, MSA, from bankruptcy to sell it for \$333m.

It also recounts how he used to dress up in costumes and use wild animals, especially tigers, to live up to his motivational seminars. "The tiger bit a woman and dragged her across the patio. I take goldfish now."

That's one way of living up the sales force, I suppose.

Oliver Ashworth, Manchester-based value makers, issued his float prospectus on Tuesday – but only just of the printing company was delivered to printers Williams Lea on Monday evening, and copies should have been ready for inspection the following morning.

In the event they were not

ready until Tuesday afternoon, for one simple reason. Williams Lea was taken over by an American company on Monday, and the Americans were too busy handing out P45s at the printing plant to allow the Oliver Ashworth prospect to be printed.

Happily everything has now been sorted out. Oliver Ashworth, led by chief executive Roger McDowall and commercial director Philip McDowall, is backed by the likes of Rothschild's venture capital, with 23 per cent, and MAM Private Equity, with 6 per cent. Let's hope they can complete the float before they too get gobbled up.

Scruttons, the engineering and shipping group, is planning to float off its managed guarding business on AIM.

Given the business is a tiddler by stock market standards, it's good to see that Scruttons chairman, Sir Peter Parker, is keeping the publicity side in the family.

The company has retained three spokespeople from top City spin doctors Brunswick to oversee the float. Sir Peter's son, Alan Parker, is the proprietor of Brunswick.

Sir Rocco Forte and his Italian wife, Alina, took the train north from London to Yorkshire on Wednesday, the day

Granada announced its first results following the acquisition of Forté.

A year ago nearly to the day, Sir Rocco was also in the north, preparing to go shopping, when Granada announced its results and its £3.3bn bid for Forté.

This time Sir Rocco doesn't have so much to worry about, and certainly won't be forced to burry back to London.

Gordon Campbell, the chief executive at Courtaulds, is sporting a swish new suit in a subtle shade of light green.

Mr Campbell tells me that the suit is made of Tencel, Courtaulds's new wonder fibre made in a plant in Korea. Tencel "feels like silk but is 10 times more hard-wearing" or something like that.

The Courtaulds boss ordered the suit last Tuesday morning and it was ready by Thursday afternoon, a wonder of Far Eastern service.

Mr Campbell contrasts this with his experience this week, when he took some shirts in to be cleaned at a dry cleaners in London.

When asked when he wanted them back, he said: "Next week."

"Just as well. We can't do them till next Wednesday," was the reply.

John Willcock

Foreign Exchange Rates

Country	Spot	1 month	3 months	D-Mark	Spot	1 month	3 months
US	1.6999	1.71	1.72	1.00	0.6971	0.6971	0.6971
Canada	2.2640	2.27	2.28	1.00	0.6971	0.6971	0.6971
Germany	1.6999	1.71	1.72	1.00	0.6971	0.6971	0.6971
France	6.5452	6.55	6.56	1.00	0.6971	0.6971	0.6971
Italy	2.0000	2.01	2.02	1.00	0.6971	0.6971	0.6971
Japan	161.1	161.2	161.3	1.00	0.6971	0.6971	0.6971
UK	1.71	1.72	1.73	1.00	0.6971	0.6971	0.6971
Spain	161.1	161.2	161.3	1.00	0.6971	0.6971	0.6971
Denmark	6.5452	6.55	6.56	1.00	0.6971	0.6971	0.6971
Netherlands	2.0000	2.01	2.02	1.00	0.6971	0.6971	0.6971
Sweden	1.6999	1.71	1.72	1.00	0.6971	0.6971	0.6971
Switzerland	1.6999	1.71	1.72	1.00	0.6971	0.6971	0.6971
Australia	1.6999	1.71	1.72	1.00	0.6971	0.6971	0.6971
Hong Kong	7.75	7.76	7.77	1.00	0.6971	0.6971	0.6971
Malaysia	4.6667	4.67	4.68	1.00	0.6971	0.6971	0.6971
New Zealand	2.378	2.38	2.39	1.00	0.6971	0.6971	0.6971
Saudi Arabia	6.376	6.38	6.39	1.00	0.6971	0.6971	0.6971
Singapore	2.378	2.38	2.39	1.00	0.6971	0.6971	0.6971

Interest Rates

UK	Base	600%	Discount	2.50%	US	Prime	8.75%	Japan	Discount	0.50%
France	Intervention	3.20%	Canada	7.25%	France	Discount	5.00%	Belgium	Discount	2.50%
Italy	Discount	7.50%	Spain	10.00%	Italy	Discount	5.00%	Switzerland	Discount	1.00%
Netherlands	Advances	2.50%	Denmark	10.00%	Netherlands	Discount	5.00%	Sweden	Discount	1.00%
Advances	2.50%	Discount	3.25%	Repo (Avg)	4.50%	Lombard	4.25%			

Bond Yields

UK	6.00%	Discount	2.50%
US	5.75%	Discount	2.50%
France	5.75%	Longbond	2.50%
Intervention	3.20%	Canada	
Italy		Prime	4.75%
Discount	7.5%	Discount	5.00%
Netherlands		Denmark	
Advances	2.50%	Discount	3.25%

Bond Yields					
Country	1yr	yield %	10yr	yield %	
UK	7.1%	7.92	7.1%	7.43	
US	6.7%	6.87	7.1%	7.01	
Japan	5.51%	5.68	6.2%	5.65	
Australia	8%	1.68	10%	7.2	
Germany	6.25%	4.91	6.25%	5.8	
France	5%	4.8	7.25%	5.7	

Yields calculated on bond basis.

Money Market Rates			
	Overnight	7 Days	1 Month
Interbank	5 5/8%	5 1/2%	5 1/2%
Sterling Call			
Local Authority Depos	6%	5 1/2%	5 1/2%
Discount Market Rates	5 1/2%		
Prime Rate (8 1/2%)			
Call Rate			
ECU Linked Deal			

Tourist Rates			
	E Buys	20,040	E Buys
Australia	20,040		France/Germany
Austria/Schilling	17,220		Germany/Italy
Belgium/France	25,020		Greece/Denmark
Canada/Dollars	53,450		Hong Kong

United eclipsed by Boksic and Zidane

Football
GLENN MOORE

Before Newcastle United's Uefa Cup tie in Metz on Tuesday night the point was made that the French took little account of the form of their footballing allies in England, preferring to follow that of their exports to the continent. The following night, at Old Trafford, we understood why.

Porto to report Weah over 'clash' with Costa

Porto have complained to Uefa officials about an incident in which Milan's George Weah is alleged to have head-butted the Portuguese champions' defender Jorge Costa after their head-to-head Champions League game on Wednesday. Jose Carlos Esteves, Porto's club doctor, said that Costa, who was shown on television after the game with blood streaming from his nose, would have to be sent to hospital to assess the damage. "Costa was head-butted by Weah and did not have time to defend himself," Esteves said.

Boksic, the leader of the line United craved and still need. Boksic preferred to join the Juventus revolution — they had a turnover of 18 players in the summer — and United ended up with an inexperienced Norwegian, an unproven Dutchman and an inexperienced Czech. For all its growing attractiveness the Premiership is still struggling to acquire the overseas elite before they begin thinking of retirement.

But it is not just the players. In times past English efforts could overcome superior continental technique. No longer.

Jose Carlos Esteves, Porto's club doctor, said that Costa, who was shown on television after the game with blood streaming from his nose, would have to be sent to hospital to assess the damage. "Costa was head-butted by Weah and did not have time to defend himself," Esteves said.

before resuming his midfield position, Zidane, who had filled in for the left-back, waited to touch hands with Torricelli in recognition of his efforts. It is not just technique where we are lagging behind. Juninho may have been exaggerating when he said, last week, even the lowliest Italian club was better organised than an English one, but there was more than a grain of truth. Arsenal and Chelsea are beginning to experience the attention to detail which is standard practice on the continent but there is a way to go. While the fitness trainer at Juventus is as important as most of the players, the use of masseurs and dieticians is a new development in England.

Then there is the coaching. Alex Ferguson and Brian Kidd are two of the better tacticians in the Premiership but United, for all their effort, looked static and formulaic compared with Juventus. After Roy Hodgson, Terry Venables and Bobby Robson, how many of our coaches command a worldwide reputation?

But is it their fault? An English club manager has responsibilities from dealing with agents and parents to groundsmen and sponsors. At the lower level, where many learn their trade, they can even find themselves painting the stands. Others come in at the top with little more than a two-week coaching course (if that) and several years personal observation to equip them to be the key figure in a multi-million pound business. The new preparation course for managers is long overdue, an extension of the continental practice of letting coaches coach and club officials deal with peripheral matters would be a further boost.



Horror show: David Beckham (left) and Ole Gunnar Solskjær are frustrated at Old Trafford



Photograph: David Ashdown

'Old guard' oppose Venables

Terry Venables is facing a hostile reception from Australia's football establishment over his appointment as national team coach. An Australian newspaper's survey showed that two-thirds of national league coaches opposed his hiring for Australia's 1998 World Cup campaign ahead of a domestic candidate. The view is shared by several former internationals and one former national team coach.

Some negative comments from the old guard... they are critical because we did not choose a local, the Soccer Australia chairman, David Hill, said. "Are they seriously suggesting that we should not have picked the best coach available and overlooked him for a locally based coach?" Hill said on his return from London, where he recruited the former Barcelona and Tottenham manager.

England in the World Cup and beat them, for professional reasons of course," Hill said. A straw poll in the *Sydney Morning Herald* yesterday showed eight Australian national league coaches opposed the appointment, four backed it, and two were undecided.

Somebody is taking us for a ride, someone who clearly doesn't understand the game," the Marconi coach, Manfred Schaefer, said. The former Australia coach, Frank Ark, described Venables as "not a team leader". A common theme among the dissenters was concern that Venables would still live in England, where he will oversee

Becker delivers on home territory

Tennis
NESA STACEVIC
reports from Hannover

Boris Becker, roared on by a boisterous home crowd, served 24 aces to pull off a 7-6, 7-6 victory over the Pete Sampras at the ATP Tour World Championship here yesterday.

Becker, the defending champion, advanced to the semi-finals after bringing his record to 2-0 in the round-robin section. Sampras, like the German a two-time champion in the end-of-season event, dropped to 1-1. It was Becker's second victory over Sampras within a month, the German having beaten him in the final of the Eurocard Open last month in Stuttgart.

In the first set, Becker was the first in trouble and had to battle hard to avoid falling behind. He saved two break points in the second game, another in the fourth, and three more in the 10th, coming from behind 0-40 to turn the set his way. Sampras faced only one break point in the first set, in the third game. With the 15,000 capacity crowd in the Europe Hall stomping their feet and roaring Becker on, Sampras screamed in frustration when Becker pulled even at deuce by hitting a winner on the line.

Sampras appeared on the way to evening the score when he broke Becker for a 5-4 lead in the second. But he served two double faults in the next game, fought off two break points and finally succumbed when Becker hit another low return that Sampras could not get over the net. Becker again prevailed in the tie-break, hitting a spectacular backhand passing shot to clinch the match after 2hr 9min.

Earlier, the new, Samurri hairstyle of Goran Ivanisevic did not help him against Michael Chang, who rallied to outlast the Croat, 6-7, 6-6, 6-1. But the match was irrelevant for the tournament as Ivanisevic was already assured of a place in the semi-finals while Chang, last year's runner-up, had lost both his first two matches and had no chance of advancing. Chang at least picked up \$100,000 for his win.

The other semi-finalist from that group will be known today, when Thomas Muster plays Richard Krajicek.

Andre Agassi, booted off court after a dismal performance, was fined £30,000 for failing to appear at two pre-tournament functions. ATP officials announced yesterday that Agassi, who pulled out of the rest of the tournament because of the illness, had been fined five per cent of his Tour prize money for the year.

Burundi bitterly disappointed by World Cup exit

Burundi, a small country in central Africa, has been bitterly disappointed by its exit from the World Cup. The team, coached by a former international, had been expected to perform well, but their exit was a shock to the nation.

The players are shattered. Ribicak said: "In sport, we have no ethnic differences, everybody plays together. It was the only thing we had." After beating Sierra Leone 2-0 on aggregate in the preliminary round, Burundi were looking forward to a qualifying group that also included Ghana, Gabon and Morocco. "We had nothing to fear from those

teams. We would have won them all." The players are shattered. Ribicak said: "In sport, we have no ethnic differences, everybody plays together. It was the only thing we had." After beating Sierra Leone 2-0 on aggregate in the preliminary round, Burundi were looking forward to a qualifying group that also included Ghana, Gabon and Morocco. "We had nothing to fear from those

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King marks Telford's change

Wayne Clarke became the GM of the Vauxhall Conference's latest managerial casualty this week when he resigned after 18 months in charge of Telford United.

The former Wolves, Birmingham and Everton striker, the younger brother of Allan Clarke (once of Leeds and England), leaves the Shropshire side in a comfortable 11th place in the table, although they have lost six of their last seven Conference matches. His successor has already been appointed: Jake King, the former Shrewsbury, Wrexham and Cardiff defender.

King, who had been assistant manager of the League of Wales club, Newtown, will be working without a contract at the Buck's Head, and says that if he does not get results he will not be "hanging around earning easy money". King takes charge of Telford for the first time tomorrow at Dover Athletic.

Having been rebuffed by Graham Roberts, who chose to remain in charge at the Icicle League leaders, Yeovil Town, Kettering Town yesterday confirmed that their caretaker manager, Steve Berry, can dispense with the first part of his job title. Last week Berry steered Kettering to their third consecutive win when they beat their local rivals Rushden & Diamonds in the Northamptonshire Senior Cup, and tomorrow he will hope to celebrate his permanent appointment with a home win over Bromsgrove.

A long way down the non-League pyramid, the former Chelsea midfielder Ian Britton is also embarking on a managerial career at the North West Counties League Second Division side, Nelson.

Spracklen comes back to Britain

Mike Spracklen, one of Britain's most distinguished coaches, has agreed to return from California, where he has been in charge of the United States Olympic eight, to become the women's national coach, writes Hugh Matheson.

Spracklen was a builder in Marlow before becoming a full-time professional coach 12 years ago, after guiding Steven Redgrave to his first Olympic gold in 1984. He then trained Redgrave and Andy Holmes to gold and bronze in Seoul in 1988 in the coxed and coxed pairs.

In 1989 he went to Canada as national coach, and after two silver medals in the World Championships his eight took the Olympic title in Barcelona in 1992. He then moved to the United States and looked likely to repeat the trick when his eight was in the world in 1994. But the coxed pair finished fifth in Atlanta — Spracklen's worst result since the mid-1980s.

The British women's squad has risen to the front ranks in the last few years, recently under the guidance of Billy Mason of Imperial College.

Non-League notebook
RUPERT METCALF

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McRae on track
Scot follows a familiar path
in the RAC Rally, page 30

sport

United undone
Juventus underline shortcomings
at Old Trafford, page 31

Best fires untimely broadside at Rowell

Rugby Union
CHRIS HEWITT

English rugby's extraordinary ability to walk straight from one public relations disaster to another reacted yesterday as Dick Best, a former national coach and current top dog at the League leaders Harlequins, took an embarrassing swipe at the entire Twickenham hierarchy.

Coming on top of the governing body's bitter wrangle with its own senior clubs, Best's outburst was further proof that it would be easier to find a sense of harmony at The Ridings School in Harlow.

Yesterday should have been about Chris Sheasby, the Wasps' loose-forward who was called up to face the Italians when Ben Clarke's dead leg forced his withdrawal from the side.

Sheasby will win his first cap in his customary position of No 8, with Tim Rodber shifting to the blindside flank. Martin Corry, the Bristol captain, comes in on the bench.

Sadly, Sheasby's delight was undermined by Best's decision to plant a depth-charge direct-

ly beneath the Good Ship England.

In an interview with the magazine *Rugby News* he said: "I don't think Rowell will be either coach or manager by the time of the next World Cup in 1999. The RFU have got to invest in him but the problem is I don't believe they have much faith in him. You don't give someone a one-year contract if you have confidence in him, do you? It tells me that at the end of the season it's probably 'Goodnight Irene'."

Best, who lost his own coaching role with England when Rowell reshuffled his panel after the 1994 tour of South Africa, has thrown darts at his old adversary before. This

time, however, he opted for the flame-thrower by saying: "He avoids me at all costs. Rowell has avoided confrontation all his life - he did not even tell me himself that I was out - and that is why he has never spoken to me since I was dismissed. He has never telephoned me about my Harlequins players. He just can't bring himself to do it."

At least some of the players who participated in the 1994 tour privately believe that Best was badly treated; others, on the other hand, found the whiff of sour grapes almost overpowering yesterday. Understandably, even the most senior squad members decided to keep their counsel, but both

Rowell and the RFU felt compelled to respond.

The coach was clearly not amused as he put his players through their paces at Twickenham - "I don't understand the motivation of people who seek to disrupt the national team," he said - while Derek Morgan, chairman of the National Playing Committee, insisted that the RFU was "wholeheartedly behind Jack and his team". RFU sources said they would be studying Best's comments before deciding whether he might be charged with bringing the game into disrepute.

Sheasby added to the furore by saying that his close-season move from Harlequins to Wasps

had been crucial in his elevation from club player to international. "If I had stayed at Harlequins, I would have been pushed by certain people and that would not have gone down well with England in the current climate," he said. Clearly, Sheasby believes that any recommendation from Best would have been disregarded by Rowell.

Somewhere in the midst of the gunsmoke, Phil de Glanville was attempting to assert his authority as England's new captain by focusing the minds of his players on the task in hand. As ever, the coolly collected Bath centre was a paragon of diplomacy - as far as we are concerned, this is a non-issue, he said. But there was no hiding

the hint of frustration in his voice.

With five new caps in the side, De Glanville has enough on his plate without having to digest unpalatable attacks by former coaches. He is, however, sufficiently skilled as a leader to turn negatives into positives: if his players were not climbing the walls to get at Italy before Best's intervention, they certainly are now.

"Winning is the first and only priority," the captain said. "We need the new guys to contribute from minute one. There will be no honeymoon period for them. It has to be straight in because the Italians are very skilled at half-back, well organised defensively and are ca-

pable of playing some fast rugby.

"If there was ever any complacency in this camp, it's now long gone. To my mind, the Italians are good enough to turn the Five Nations tournament into a Six Nations and they will be coming here to prove exactly that."

The Italians, who suffered complications of their own yesterday as their planned flight from Florence was cancelled at short notice, will not experience Twickenham at its most intimidating. Only 40,000 tickets had been sold last night and, unusually, the RFU will put the remainder on sale on Saturday in an effort to maximise business at the turnstiles.

Baa-Baas ready to run, page 30

Spencer joins QPR for £2.5m

Football
NICK DUXBURY

John Spencer yesterday took his goalscoring skills a short distance across west London when he left Chelsea to join Queen's Park Rangers for £2.5m.

The 26-year-old Spencer was Chelsea's top scorer with 13 Premiership goals last season having been joint top scorer the previous campaign. However, the 5ft 6in striker has been frozen out following the Ruud Gullit revamp which saw Gianluca Vialli partnering Mark Hughes up front.

Spencer's departure may not be the first. Mark Stein, Gavin Peacock, Eddie Newton and David Rocastle all appear to be surplus to requirements and Dennis Wise's future has been in doubt this week.

The transfer of Spencer, who arrived at Stamford Bridge in a £450,000 move from Rangers in 1992, has helped Chelsea to balance the books following last week's £4.5m signing of a third Italian, Gianfranco Zola.

For First Division Rangers, Spencer's capture, coming soon after Trevor Sinclair's decision to withdraw his transfer request, is a welcomed shot in the arm.

"I'm sure he'll be a great asset to this club," Stewart Houston, the QPR manager, said of his first signing. "He has a good background and is a quality player with experience. Alan Shearer reputation as the world's fastest healer was

further enhanced yesterday when he strode back into the Newcastle team for tomorrow's game at Chelsea.

The world's most expensive player returns to the Premiership just one month after his second groin operation and was described by the Newcastle spokesman, Graham Courtney, as being "fit as a fiddle". His comeback is a timely one for the Premiership leaders with Les Ferdinand weeks away from playing after an operation for a depressed cheekbone.

With Shearer and Ferdinand around, Darren Huckerby has decided his only chance of first-team action lies at the other end of the table with Coventry.

If all goes well in talks today, striker Huckerby, who started his career with Lincoln City and joined Newcastle for £400,000 12 months ago, will agree a £1m transfer and could make his Coventry debut at home to Aston Villa tomorrow.

Huckerby's acquisition will probably not please Coventry's bank manager. The club lost nearly £8m for the year ended last May, the result of spending £7.8m on players and a subsequent rise in the wage bill of £1.7m to £5.7m.

One of Terry Venables' new international charges, the Australian keeper Marc Schwarzer, has turned down Manchester City and joined Bradford City. Schwarzer, who will cost Bradford £300,000 from Dynamo Dresden, will make his debut at Charlton tomorrow. Cantona eclipsed, page 31

Woods has to iron out flaws after worst round



False start: Tiger Woods drives for the fairway as he stumbled to the worst round of his short professional career yesterday, to finish 12 shots behind Greg Norman after the first day of the Australian Open. The 20-year-old American carded a seven-over-par 79 at the Australian Golf Club course in Sydney, while Norman scored a 67.

Woods, the winner of two tournaments since turning professional two months ago, struggled for accuracy around the Jack Nicklaus-designed course. His previous highest as a professional was a 78 at the Tour Championship in Oklahoma last month. "My good shots turned out bad, and my bad shots turned out horrible,"

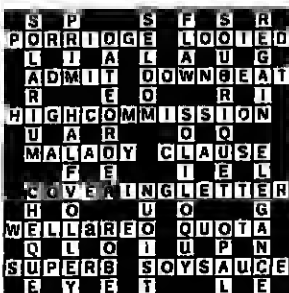
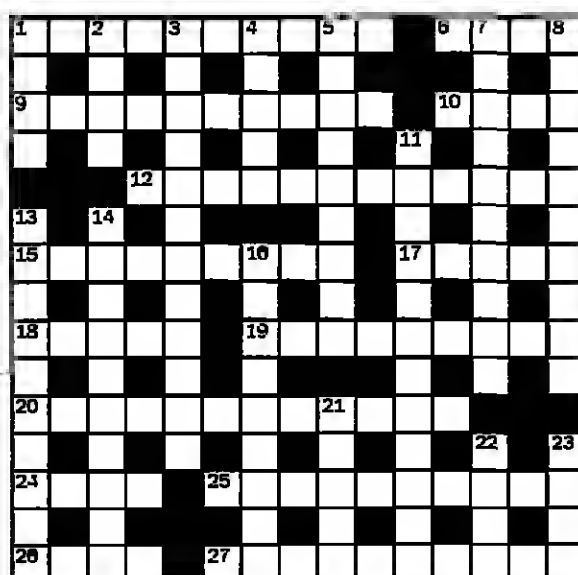
Woods said. "I tried my heart out, I just couldn't execute the shots. I was out of rhythm." Another round in the high 70s or 80s today would see Woods miss the cut after being reportedly paid more than £150,000 in appearance fees. Scores, Digest, page 31. Photograph: Ross Land/Empic

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3151, Friday 22 November

By Phil

Thursday's Solution



- ACROSS**
- 1 Impromptu expression of dissatisfaction with shirt-maker? (3, 3, 4)
 - 6 Introductions for books usually mean further paperwork (4)
 - 9 One who finishes trio meant for recompensation? Right (10)
 - 10 Insect burrowing into leaf repeatedly? (4)
 - 12 The most recent development in explosives technology? (4, 2, 2, 4)
 - 15 Mostly lack appeal in performance, like unaccompanied choirs (1, 8)
 - 17 Something linked with TV show that is presented in a can (3-2)
 - 18 Unusual type of horse runs to river (5)

- 19 One who's not constrained about each amount of information found in newspaper (3, 4, 5)
- 20 Fruit and vegetables used to be supplied by this stage (6, 6)
- 24 Former partner's in the morning paper (4)
- 25 Grass mostly waiting to implicate one not acting illegally (3-7)
- 26 Repeat that finally is extracted from tin? (4)
- 27 Unhappy sad male swallowing a very soft lump in the throat? (5, 5)

- 4 Family gathering's beginning with the sound of a bell (5)
- 5 Idiot made a meal of going round too with putter. Initially - driver should be seen here! (9)
- 7 Nude dancing, during which a small number quit flat (10)
- 8 Struggle to embrace bird - it may be brothers in love! (10)
- 11 It incorporates us in a more prominent case (5, 7)
- 13 Shout about a boy dressing (5, 5)
- 14 Opera: vital aria without one in error gets cheers (2, 8)
- 16 Fellow due to tangle with a girl in difficulties? (9)
- 21 True, millions can be found in country (5)
- 22 Speech defect is evident in recording (4)
- 23 Unpleasant look of headless goblin (4)

White to the rescue

Cricket
MYLES HODGSON
reports from Melbourne
England A 231-4 v Victoria

Craig White produced his most accomplished innings in England colours to help the A team out of trouble and into a commanding position on the opening day of their four-day match with Victoria at Melbourne's Optus Oval stadium yesterday.

The Yorkshire player, who last played for England in the sixth and final Test against the West Indies at Trent Bridge in August last year, re-established his credentials for the Test all-

rounder's place with an unbeaten 92 as the tourists reached 231 for 4 at the close.

White's vital contribution, which included crucial partnerships with both Mark Butcher and Adam Hogg, enabled England to recover from losing Michael Vaughan, Anthony McGrath and Owais Shah, which had left them struggling on 59 for 3.

White, dropped twice on 45 and 85, overcame numerous weather interruptions to steer the tourists out of trouble with a 78-run stand with Butcher, who fell for 55 after being brilliantly stumped by the wicket-keeper Peter Roach off the off-spinner Brad Hodge.

White continued his assault

and hammered 11 fours in an innings lasting more than three hours, to finish just eight short of England A's first century of the tour having combined with Hollis (450) in an unbeaten 94-run fifth-wicket partnership.

First day of tour: Victoria won
ENGLAND A - First innings: 59 M P Vaughan c Roach b Hodge; 5 A McGrath lbw b Fleming; 5 O A Shah c Foster b Doornik; 3 C White not out; 45 A J Hollis not out; 45 Sides (24, 24-0).
Total (for 4, 80 overs): 231.
To bat: W A Gilchrist, W K Hodge, A F Glen, G Chappell, O W Hoggarty.
Bowling: Fleming 16-4-27-1; Side 14-2-38-1; Doornik 15-6-31-1; Harvey 14-1-55-0; Steyn 10-1-50-0; Hodge 4-0-15-2; Harper 3-0-13-0.
VICTORIA: "A" C Doornik, W G Ayers, B J Hodge, M R Foster, L G Harper, J J Harvey, O W Fleming, O J Salter, S J Steyn, G R Vennart, T P J Roach.
Umpires: G T Morrow and I W Stratford.

Scudamore eclipsed by McCoy

Racing
GREG WOOD

Tony McCoy, the champion National Hunt jockey, reached a century of winners in a season faster than any rider in jump racing history yesterday when he partnered Class Of Ninetytwo to victory in a handicap chase at Warwick. He beat the previous record, held by Peter Scudamore and set in both 1988 and 1989, by 30 days.

Were he not such a consummate sportsman, however, Scudamore might be tempted to demand a stewards' inquiry, since McCoy's achievement rests on the date of his 100th winner, rather than the number of days taken to ride it. The recent introduction of National Hunt racing during the summer, with the season deemed to start in June rather than August, has moved the goalposts significantly, and while McCoy need-

ed 331 rides to reach three figures, Scudamore took just 290 in 1989.

None the less, yesterday's new mark will be seen as the latest milestone in a British riding career which has yet to reach its third birthday. McCoy claimed his first senior riders' title at the end of last season, just 12 months after running away with



McCoy: Fastest to century of jump racing victories

the championship for conditional jockeys, and at 22 is already established as one of the finest pilots of his generation.

"Three years ago I couldn't imagine getting 100 rides, let alone 100 winners," McCoy said. "If I can keep up the momentum, retaining the title is the big aim, and it would be nice to ride some big winners along the way too."

Martin Pipe, the champion trainer, played a leading role in the record-breaking season of both Scudamore and McCoy, and with his assistance, Scudamore's most impressive achievement, the 221 winners he rode in a single season, may also be within McCoy's reach.

"Obviously Peter was an unbelievable rider and it is fantastic to beat the record that he set," McCoy said. "My main concern is staying in one piece but if things go well I'd have a go at beating his 221."

Racing, page 29

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